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Christmas lottery rains millions on Spanish town

VIC, SPAIN—THE FAT MAN CAME EARLY and jolly in Spain's Christmas lottery, showering euro510 million (US$612 million) in winnings on a town with the bite-size name of Vic.

The sweepstakes known as "El Gordo"—the Fat One—spread a total of euro2.02 billion (US$2.4 billion) in Christmas cheer

CHRISTMAS/ A4

4 'antijueteng' mayors found to be coddlers

By Christian V. Esguerra

KAPAL NG MUKHA!

FOUR MAYORS WHO RECEIVED awards last year for their supposed efforts to stamp out "jueteng"—the hugely popular illegal

4 ANTIJUETENG/ A6

Energy superbody junked

SHARING WITH THE OLD AND THE YOUNG
Keeping up with the spirit of Christmas, President Macapagal-Arroyo visits the Hospicio de San Jose in Manila to distribute gifts to both the elderly people and the homeless children staying in the institution.

MALACAÑANG-PCPO PHOTOS

Ermita says EO review to prevent rift in DOE

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo is putting on the back burner her plan to create an oil and power superbody, which has been heavily criticized by business leaders and lawmakers for rendering Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla powerless.

In a radio interview, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the President ordered a review of Executive Order No. 474 which will establish the Philippine Strategic Oil, Gas, Energy Resources and Power Infrastructure Office, less than a month after she signed it.

The office was to be headed by Lotilla's subordinate, Undersecretary Peter Abaya.

Ermita cited the need to "fine-tune" the EO's provisions because of fears that it would encroach on the powers and functions of Lotilla.

"We have to do this to prevent a misunderstanding between the secretary and his undersecretary," he said, adding:

"We don't want to complicate how the energy department is being run."

The EO will give Abaya broad powers to take charge not only of DOE matters but also in oil and gas exploration, which is currently handled by Philippine National Oil Co., and the privatization of power, which is the responsibility of Private Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp.

In an earlier interview, Abaya admitted to giving the President inputs on the EO but denied insinuations that he was easing out Lotilla from power. The order has not been forwarded for

ENERGY/ A4

GMA appointment of 2 top officials draws flak

By Philip C. Tubeza and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG HAS DRAWN FLAK for its "11th-hour" appointment of two officials "with questionable backgrounds."

Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales yesterday said the Palace might have been trying to pull a fast one on the public with its appointment of Napoleon Morales and Arthur Yap as deputy customs commissioner and presidential adviser on job creation, respectively.

"While we are busy with 11th-hour shopping, the Palace is also busy with 11th-hour appointments," said the militant party-list representative. "This is a dangerous and undemocratic track taken by the Palace to surround itself with questionable people loyal to it but are detrimental to public good."

On Thursday, President Macapagal-Arroyo swore in Morales, former chief of Batangas customs, as officer in charge of the Bureau of Customs. He replaced Alexander Arevalo, a protege of former President Fidel V. Ramos.

The appointment paper of Yap, a former agriculture secretary, as Ms Arroyo's adviser on job creation was released on the same day.

Rosales said, however, that the appointments should be recalled because of the two men's alleged involvement in irregularities.

A graft case against Morales is pending in the Office of the Ombudsman, she said.

She added that while the tax evasion charge against Yap had been dropped, he was also linked to the questionable P8.4-billion Agusan Reserve Area Development Project in Agusan del Sur last April.

"The President's poll ratings are already in the negative," Rosales noted. "Anything that she does is already suspect, and these appointments will only make the situation worse for her."

Rosales said appointing an official facing a pending case "with probable cause" would violate

GMA APPOINTMENT/ A4

CBCP head extols love amid crises

By Christian V. Esguerra

A GIRL WAS ONLY ABLE TO GET a banana during a food distribution program in her community. She divided the fruit between her two younger brothers and scraped the insides of the banana peel for herself.

Elsewhere, a stranger noticed a poor boy staring at a pair of slippers in a store window. He invited the boy inside and bought him the footwear. The boy, stunned by this unsolicited act of kindness, thought the man was Jesus Christ himself.

Stories like these—especially in the midst of crises—are graces from God, according to Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

"The power of love is stronger than the power of evil," he said in his Christmas message titled "Love and Service in the midst of Poverty and Misery."

"No crisis is so great it cannot be solved with God. In the midst of misery and problems, life is shot through with sharing and sacrificing love," he said.

Lagdameo sought to calm a weary public faced with the prospect of higher fuel costs and a price increase in basic commodities early next year.

CBCP/ A6

GMA ally says Ramos remark destabilizing

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE GLOVES ARE OFF.

A staunch administration ally yesterday blasted former President Fidel V. Ramos, warning that his call on President Macapagal-Arroyo to declare her stand by New Year's Day against a proposal to cancel the 2007 election was destabilizing the country.

Rep. Prospero Pichay of the ruling Lakas-CMD party said Ramos should not "dictate" on the President. He said this was "conduct unbecoming a former President" who had his "chance to make the country great."

"This is a destabilizing statement. The repercussion of his threat to withdraw support is that his statement can be construed (as a call) to oust the President. It would be sending wrong signals to the business community. That will (cause) political and economic instability to the detriment of our country," Pichay said.

"He should not be threatening the President as if he were holding her captive. The implication of his statement is that it makes him one of those who want the President out," the Surigao del Sur congressman said.

In a television interview on Thursday, Ramos denounced as a "monumental blunder" a recommendation by the Consultative Commission (ConCom) to scrap elections in 2007 and extend the term of incumbent officials until 2010 to pave the way for a shift to

GMA/ A6

Filipino grade schooler wins WTO design contest

By Blanche S. Rivera

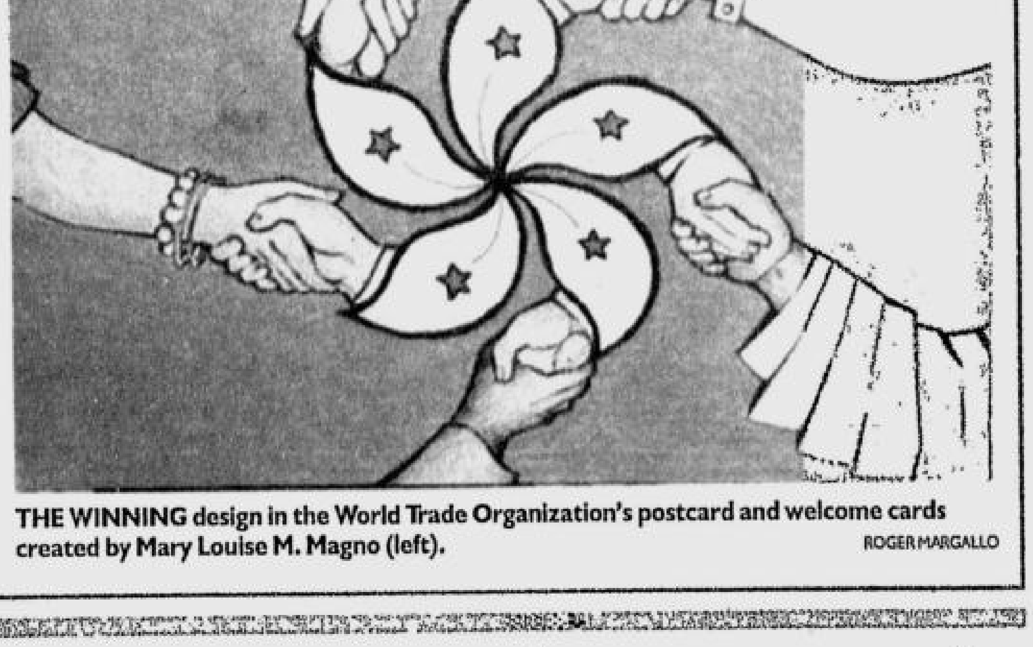
UNBEKNOWNST TO MOST OF HER COMPATRIOTS, a shy second-grader from the Philippines stood tall in the arena of global trade and development experts.

Amid all things grand, the simple artwork of 7-year-old Mary Loise Magno welcomed trade ministers from 149 countries to the recent World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong.

Her design of clasped hands encircling the Hong Kong flag was chosen from over 3,000 entries to the Welcome Card competition launched by the former British colony for the WTO's sixth meeting on Dec. 13-18.

The conference, which was held in Hong Kong for the first time, was reputedly the most crucial yet for the WTO.

FILIPINO/ A4


Welcome our friends from all over the world

THE WINNING design in the World Trade Organization's postcard and welcome cards created by Mary Louise M. Magno (left).

ROGER MARGALLO

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms becoming widespread rains over Eastern Visayas and Northeastern Mindanao. The rest of Luzon will have mostly cloudy skies with light passing showers.

COMPILED BY JAMIE ALARCON, PDI RESEARCH/12/24/05 SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Second FRONT PAGE

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Palace won't reverse Luisita ruling

By Blanche S. Rivera

MALACAÑANG WILL NOT STAND IN THE WAY of the distribution of the Hacienda Luisita, the vast sugar estate owned by the family of former President Corazon C. Aquino.

Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser C. Pangandaman yesterday declared that the President would not reverse the decision of the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council, the highest governing body on agrarian reform.

"There is no possibility that the Office of the President will change the PARC decision. It's almost unanimous. We are determined to cover Luisita," Pangandaman said in a press conference yesterday.

The PARC this week decided with finality to revoke the stock distribution option that has been in effect in Hacienda Luisita the past 16 years and give the 4,915-ha land to its farm workers.

"I don't think it would be prudent for the HLI to appeal it before the Office of the President," he said.

The Supreme Court, however, could stand in the way of the coverage of the Cojuangco land under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

Pangandaman said that the Department of Agrarian Reform would be forced to abide if the SC issues a temporary restraining order or any legal instruments that would halt the CARP coverage of Luisita.

The DAR has reactivated its legal team, the same group that put together the terminal report on Luisita, to address legal issues that may arise from the PARC decision.

The Hacienda Luisita Inc., manager of the Cojuangco sugar estate, said it was inclined to question the PARC decision before the Supreme Court.

"Only the Supreme Court can stop us, but we will fight (the HLI). We will maintain our stand in court. This is a manifestation of political will," Undersecretary for Legal Affairs Nestor Acosta, head of the legal team, said.

He dismissed the HLI's opinion that the farm workers would have to return all the benefits they got from the SDO if the land is distributed.

"They have already benefited from the land. That's already commensurate to what the farmers also got from the SDO," he said.

He said there were "a thousand issues to be resolved" concerning the Luisita case, but the DAR would not move until it receives an official complaint or legal questions about the PARC decision.

Compensation for Hacienda Luisita will be included in the proposed P15-billion land acquisition and improvement budget of the DAR for next year.

The HLI said the government better have enough money to buy Hacienda Luisita from the Cojuangcos if it would proceed with compulsory acquisition.

"I would like to assure the HLI that we have the money to pay for Luisita," Pangandaman said.

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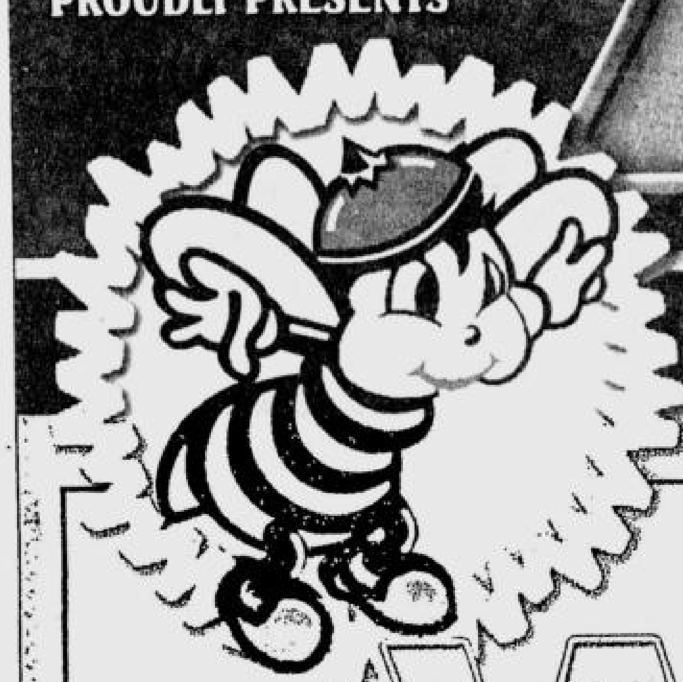

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Gov't calls unilateral ceasefire with Reds

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO DEclared a 96-hour unilateral truce with communist rebels yesterday for the Christmas and New Year season but ordered security forces to remain on alert for attacks.

She made the declaration although the rebels had already rejected any truce for the holidays.

Since 1986, the government has observed a holiday ceasefire with communist and Muslim rebels as the country marks one of the world's longest Yuletide seasons.

The Christmas season in the Philippines starts with dawn Masses from Dec. 16 and ends at the Feast of Epiphany on Jan. 6.

A bilateral truce with the main Muslim rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, has been holding since July 2003 as Malaysian-brokered peace talks continue.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the ceasefire with the communist New People's Army (NPA) was set for Dec. 24-25 and Dec. 31 to Jan. 1 but that Army and police units would remain on guard for potential violence.

"The President, through Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, approved a proposal from the defense and military establishments to declare a short unilateral suspension of military offensives," he told reporters.

The original ceasefire proposal came from Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga and was endorsed by Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz.

Bunye said the military was anticipating high-profile attacks by the NPA during the holidays as the Communist Party of the Philippines marks its 37th anniversary on Dec. 26.

The government's declaration came a day after NPA spokesperson Gregorio Rosal said the rebels would not observe the traditional Christmas ceasefire and would step up attacks in the countryside to punish abusive soldiers and police officers. *Christine Avendaño with Reuters report*

6 fishermen rescued after 16 days adrift

SIX FILIPINO FISHERMEN ADRIFT IN THE South China Sea for 16 days after their boat was damaged in bad weather were plucked to safety by a fishing vessel and reached home yesterday, a Coast Guard official said.

The fishermen left Subic, Zambales on Nov. 28 and were fishing when their boat developed engine trouble during a sudden storm, said Coast Guard Lt. Commander Felipe Macababbad.

Buffeted by high waves and strong winds, the wooden Carmen 3 was left half-submerged, and the fishermen—wearing life vests—survived by clinging to it for 16 days and rationing their food supply, he said.

They had already gone without food for three days when fishing boat F/V Teresita found them adrift 430 km west of Manila on Dec. 13, Macababbad said.

He said the six fishermen were in relatively good condition when they were taken onboard the F/V Teresita.

The crew notified the Coast Guard of their rescue, but continued with their fishing expedition, taking the six fishermen along and returning to Subic's port on Friday, he said.

"These fishermen can have a good Christmas. Even if they came home empty-handed, at least they are alive," Macababbad said.

Meanwhile, six crew members of a motor tanker were missing after the vessel caught fire while en route to Lubang from Manila yesterday morning.

A Philippine Coast Guard helicopter crew spotted the partly-razed motor tanker Tambora drifting off Limay, Bataan yesterday, but found no trace of the crew, according to a report from its National Capital Region office.

AP with report from Leila Salaverria

Meralco hits back at consumer group

By Abigail L. Ho

THE MANILA ELECTRIC CO. OF THE LOPEZ FAMILY yesterday slammed the consumer group National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms (Nasecore) for urging the Energy Regulatory Commission to junk the power distributor's settlement agreement with the National Power Corp.

In a statement issued yesterday, Meralco vice president for corporate communications Elpi Cuna Jr. said Nasecore president Pete Ilagan was riding on a "rehashed issue" to help him in his "advocacy of demonizing Meralco."

Nasecore on Thursday filed a motion seeking to dismiss the joint settlement agreement of Meralco and Napocor. The agreement settled a dispute arising from a 10-year contract for the supply of electricity (CSE).

Under the 1994 contract, the Lopez firm would draw 60,092 gigawatt-hours of electricity from Napocor, with a minimum 3,600 megawatts starting 2001.

But the power demand which Meralco projected did not fully materialize. As a result, the energy offtake from the state firm fell below the required amount of electricity specified in the contract.

Meralco and Napocor resorted to a third-party mediation process early in 2003 when their discussions on the validity of the supply contract bogged down.

The contract lapsed in 2004.

As a result of the mediation process, the two parties were able to file a settlement agreement; under which Meralco would pay Napocor around P28 billion (at P1.51 per kWh), minus adjustments, for the undrawn electricity as contained in the 10-year CSE.

But of the P28 billion, Meralco will pay only P20 billion over a five-year period since the P8 billion falls under some of the adjustments that Napocor will have to pay.

Last September, ERC chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said Meralco submitted evidence that it should pay Napocor only P14 billion.

Last week, a memorandum addressed to President Macapagal-Arroyo and supposedly written by Napocor president Cyril Del Callar surfaced, stating that Meralco owed Napocor P42 billion.

The government said it would collect this amount even if the joint settlement agreement called for the payment of a smaller amount.

Ilagan said the only way the government could collect the entire amount was for it to junk the settlement agreement. This would also prevent Meralco from passing on the charges to its customers.

Nasecore said Meralco had no right to pass these charges on to customers because these were incurred as a result of Meralco's violations of the CSE.

"The regulator has ruled in many cases that a cost incurred by a utility can be recovered from its customers only if these are reasonable, necessary, recurring and will redound to the benefit of the consumers," Ilagan said. "The penalty imposed by Napocor for Meralco's failure to purchase the power that it contracted to buy is certainly not a reasonable cost."

Cuna however said that the settlement agreement was definitely part of generation costs, which could be passed on to customers.

Also, he said Ilagan should stop insisting that Meralco owed Napocor P42 billion since the settlement agreement is now pending with the ERC.

Gov't to run on old budget for 45 days

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES RAN OUT of time in enacting the proposed P1 trillion national budget for next year, Speaker Jose de Venecia disclosed yesterday and as a result, President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration would have to operate on a reenacted budget in the first 45 days of 2006.

"The budget will be approved between Jan. 20 and Jan. 30 in which case the reenactment will be 30 days to a maximum of 45 days," he told reporters.

The Speaker, however, said the 1.2 million employees of the national government should expect an increase in their take-home pay as earlier promised by the administration.

"The increases in salaries of government employees will be retroactive and effective Jan. 1," he said, noting that about P13 billion to P15 billion had been allotted for this purpose under the proposed 2006 General Appropriations Act submitted to the House by Malacañang.

The House appropriations committee started budget deliberations in October on a high note, with Camarines Sur. Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. promising to finish committee hearings in a month's time, so that the draft GAA could be promptly sent to the House plenary for approval.

He had expected the GAA to be transmitted to the Senate for concurrence before December, but the perennial lack of quorum in most budget hearings forced him to revise the timetable.

Impatient over the delay, senators went ahead with their own budget hearings. This sparked yet another bone of contention between the two chambers of Congress since the House considers the task of passing the budget its prerogative.

Negros Oriental Rep. Jacinto Paras proposed last month that the chambers conduct a joint session over the budget "to achieve faster" results but the House majority bloc quickly thumbed down the motion.

"I see the wisdom in the motion, except that we could not see any precedent or constitutional basis for both chambers meeting as one to consider the budget," said acting Majority Leader Art Defensor. "It has never happened."

Nora ordered to undergo 12-month detox program

LOS ANGELES—PHILIPPINE FILM ÁCtress and singer Nora Aunor was ordered Thursday (yesterday, Manila time) by a US court to enter a detoxification program, nine months after she was arrested for drug possession.

Aunor, 52, was arrested at a Los Angeles airport on March 30 after the discovery of eight grams of methamphetamine in her handbag, according to police.

In her court hearing, Judge Bernard Kamins of the LA Airport Courthouse, ordered the Filipino actress to undertake a rigorous drug detoxification program, and to report back to the court for evaluation of her progress on Dec. 29.

If the court decides the program was successful, the charges against Aunor will be dropped, according to a court official.

The program, which is under Penal Code Section 1000.5, could last 12 months and involves counseling, education and other therapeutic interventions.

Aunor's defense lawyer Claire Espina said her client welcomed the opportunity to voluntarily submit herself to scrutiny to dispel speculation that she had been involved in any untoward conduct.

"Nora is very hopeful. However, her mood is tempered by the fact that it involves 'counseling.' We had to educate her as to the meaning of 'counseling,' because I understand it has a stigma in the Philippines. Here, counseling is almost a necessity when dealing with stress," Espina said.

"I told her that at various points in my life, I had seen a counselor to deal with stress. *'Yung* concept *ng* 'professional assistance' *ang problema niya kasi* (She has a problem with the concept of professional assistance). She has never exposed herself to this degree with strangers," she added.

When asked whether Aunor was checking into a facility, Espina clarified: "Nora is not checking into a facility. This is not an in-patient program—at least not for Nora, and not at this time."

While attending the program, Aunor remains free to go about her business, unencumbered in her movements. However, she will not be going home to the Philippines this Christmas. She will be staying in California.

Espina explained: "Nora can travel. There is no impediment [for her] to travel. But we advise her not to. The reason is the first 30 days of the program may involve daily counseling. Then there are periodic meetings. It is an intensive behavior modification process so travel and business must take secondary priority. *AFP with a report from Janet Susan R. Nepales, contributor*

Malls, dep't stores suffer sales drop

By Norman Bordadora

SENATE MINORITY LEADER AQUILINO Pimentel yesterday revealed that a sharp fall in the sales of department stores and shopping malls was recorded at the peak of the Christmas shopping season.

Pimentel said the report of University of Asia and the Pacific vice president Bernardo Villegas showed that shops and malls suffered a five to ten percent drop in Christmas sales.

"It indicates a deteriorating economic condition and purchasing power of Filipinos and their difficulty in coping with rising prices caused partly by additional taxes," Pimentel said.

The opposition leader in the Senate also warned the government about raising the value added tax from 10 percent to 12 percent in February.

"There is a very high probability that a 12-percent VAT would backfire on the government. With declining sales of business establishments due to a bigger tax, there will be less revenues flowing into the government coffers and the specter of an economic slump is not far-fetched," he said.

Pimentel said the report on decreased sales in malls and commercial establishments was reinforced by the latest surveys of research institutions showing that more Filipinos considered themselves poor, admitting that they sometimes missed meals for lack of money.

Quoting the Villegas study, he said major players in the retail industry had blamed the proliferation of *tiangge* or flea markets where goods were cheaper.

Pimentel said the increasing patronage of the *tiangge* showed that consumers were exhausting all means to make both ends meet.

He said small traders would rather sell their products in flea markets where the cost of operation is minimal than pay high rent for commercial space in department stores or shopping malls. He said traders also preferred the *tiangge* to avoid paying taxes.

In Binondo, Manila, Pimentel said 700 *tiangge* outlets had sprouted in 170 department stores. He added that the Bureau of Internal Revenue found out that 90 percent of these outlets did not pay taxes.

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Top official of indigenous people's agency dismissed

By Christine O. Avendaño

A REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) was dismissed from government service for faking his school records to make it appear that he was a college graduate.

Dismissed was Ulysses A. Brito, NCIP officer in charge (OIC) director for Bicol, according to Presidential Anti-Graft Commission chair Constancia de Guzman.

Brito, 45, was also given "accessory penalties" that included the cancellation of eligibility, forfeiture of leave credits and retirement benefits, and disqualification for reemployment in the government service.

De Guzman said her office was investigating 96 other presidential appointees who are facing complaints of alleged various misdeeds. Twelve of the cases involved lifestyle checks, she said.

She said four of the cases involved complaints similar to Brito's.

In a news conference in Malacañang, De Guzman said the Office of the President affirmed on Dec. 15 the PAGC resolution dated May 26, 2005, which found Brito guilty of dishonesty and falsification of official documents.

Brito had faked his transcript records to make it appear that he was a Bachelor of Arts major in English graduate of the Naga College Foundation, she said.

"He did not really graduate from the said college and in fact he only attended about 11 subjects or 33 units (there)," De Guzman said. Her office checked this out from the school registrar and the Commission on Higher Education, she added.

With the forged transcript of records, Brito was able to complete a masteral degree and doctorate on public administration at the Northwestern University in Iriga City.

De Guzman said somebody from the NCIP filed a complaint with the OP about Brito's fake college records.

Brito was the second government official dismissed for such offense. Last year, a Malacañang assistant secretary was dismissed after it was found that she was not really a doctor as she had claimed.

LOTILLA

Energy superbody junked

From page A1

review to Lotilla and other Department of Energy officials, it was learned.

Resignation letter

Lotilla has threatened to quit his post, apparently due to the power play. In July, he submitted a letter of resignation to the President, but she has yet to act on it.

Ermita said he had prevailed upon the secretary to stay with the Arroyo administration. "He (Lotilla) told me he would not do anything that would only unsettle further the situation."

Lotilla is expected to arrive from New Zealand today after a one-week study tour, together with other officials of the DOE and the Energy Regulatory Commission, in preparation for next year's launching of the wholesale electricity market in the Philippines.

Bypassed

Ermita admitted that Lotilla was bypassed in drafting the EO. "There was no tight coordination when this (EO) was made. This is why we have put its implementation on hold until everything is clarified," he said.

A week ago, one of Ms Arroyo's closest advisers, Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, urged Ms Arroyo to revoke the EO which he described as a "policy quicksand."

The order, Salceda said, "would give vast powers to an individual without accountability over a strategic industry which spawned the country's monumental follies—the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant and the independent power producer (IPP) deals."

GMA appointment of 2 top officials draws flak

From page A1

the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees.

She observed that no less than Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes had opposed Morales' appointment and had accused him of smuggling when he was still customs chief of Batangas.

"Even Angie Reyes opposed him. Doesn't [Reyes] carry any weight?" Rosales said.

But in a radio interview, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita insisted that Morales was fit to head the BOC, albeit in an acting capacity.

Ermita admitted awareness of the graft charge facing Morales, but pointed out that the latter had yet to be named "regular customs commissioner."

"I don't know the status of the case filed by Secretary Reyes. But everything will only come into the equation if a decision has been reached to make [Morales] a permanent commissioner," Ermita said.

'High collection record'

In choosing Morales, the President gave more weight to his performance, Ermita said.

"In all positions that he has been assigned to, he has consistently shown a high record of collection. The President said, 'Let's try and see how he performs because the job at the BOC is really very simple,'" Ermita said.

According to a statement issued by Malacañang, Morales was recognized for his high revenue collections as Batangas customs chief, with an accumulated collection surplus of over P7 billion during his term.

The bulk of the Philippines' oil imports passes through the Batangas port because most of the refineries are based in this Southern Luzon province.

Thus, collections at the Batangas port have risen substantially since 2004 mainly because of the spiral in crude oil prices.

Cornstarch shipment

Reyes filed a graft case against Morales on March 2.

In a letter to Overall Deputy Ombudsman Margarito Gervacio Jr., Reyes said: "We have strong reason to believe that the customs officials of the Port of Batangas are liable for possible violations of Republic Act No. 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act."

Although Reyes did not specify any individual among the Batangas customs officials, Morales was the head of the unit at that time.

Reyes cited a finding by the appraiser/examiner of the Port of Cebu that Batangas customs officials had released a misdeclared cornstarch shipment that was imposed .01 percent in duties instead of 20 percent.

He said this reflected a 95-percent discrepancy because the importer paid only P167,051 against the P5.165 million in duties after examination and appraisal.

MORALES EDWIN BACASMAS

YAP JOAN BONDOC

"This shows that the Philippine government suffered undue injury, and that the transaction was manifestly and grossly disadvantageous to the state's interest," Reyes said.

Malacañang, however, insisted that Morales was already cleared of the charge by the Office of the Ombudsman before he was sworn in on Thursday.

Coconut levy funds

As for Yap's case, Rosales said, "we had an inquiry in the House on this because the project was going to use P8 billion in coconut levy funds when it had nothing to do with coconuts."

"They answered that it was still in the exploratory stage. But of course, the project did not push through because it was exposed," she said.

Yap has denied pushing for the project. But Rosales said then Philippine Coconut Authority Administrator Evangeline Valbuena lost her job after she exposed it.

"There's a lot of these [details] that are so far on the level of allegations. Nevertheless, the Palace should not be in a hurry to appoint people with questionable backgrounds," Rosales said, adding:

"What does this say about transparency in government?"

From the ranks

At the BOC, Romulo Pagulayan, chair of the employees' union, said he hoped that Morales would work to improve the plight of workers.

Pagulayan also said he was not bothered by talks linking Morales to smuggling. He said that as long as the charge had not yet been filed in court, this was not enough to oust the latter.

"We will welcome whoever is named commissioner because we know the power to appoint does not rest with us. But we hope [Morales] will be pro-employee because he used to be one of us," Pagulayan said in a phone interview.

According to a BOC statement issued on Thursday, Morales joined the bureau in 1968 as a messenger. He eventually became customs examiner, principal examiner, appraiser and principal appraiser.

People holding these positions are responsible for the examination, valuation and classification of imported goods, which are the bases for the payment of duties and taxes.

Asked to comment on the bureau having three commissioners in a year, Pagulayan said this reflected the disarray at the higher levels of the administration.

When 2005 began, the BOC commissioner was George Jereos. He retired in February and was replaced by Alberto Lina.

But Lina, along with the rest of the "Hyatt 10," resigned in July and called on the President to also step down amid accusations that she stole the 2004 election.

Arevalo was then named acting commissioner to replace Lina.

With a report from Leila B. Salaverria

Christmas lottery rains millions on Spanish town

From page A1

around Spain on Thursday, much of it on this Barcelona-area town of 30,000 that is more routinely associated with churches and convents.

All 1,700 first-prize tickets, each worth euro300,000 (US$360,000), were sold by one lottery office in Vic.

Wine on streets

"I won't believe it until I see the money," said 18-year-old Alexandra Montaner. She giggled with glee as revelers chugged sparkling wine from bottles and sprayed it at each other on the streets of Vic.

"I have never seen so many people on the streets," said Montaner, who works at her parents' catering company and planned to buy a new car for herself and a fancy vacation for her folks.

Police had to cut off the Vic street that is home to the lottery office that sold the first-prize tickets.

How they won

"This is new for us," the manager of that lottery office, Miquel Colina, said in an understatement. "This has absolutely overwhelmed us."

There are lots of ways to win at least something in the nearly 200-year-old lottery.

The lottery features a system of shared numbers designed to spread wealth rather than concentrate it in a jackpot. The idea is for the big money to trickle through Spanish society.

Each five-digit number ranging from 00001 to 85000 appeared on 1,700 tickets costing euro20 (US$24) apiece. The luckiest gamblers this year held the first-prize number 20085.

It was not the first time all the first-prize tickets were sold in one town. It happened last year, also in the Catalonia region, in a town named Sort, Catalan for "luck." And it happened in 2000 in the town of Segovia.

Spanish tradition

The lottery is a hallowed Spanish tradition that marks the official start of the holiday season.

The annual prize ceremony takes more than three hours because nearly 1,800 numbers bring some kind of prize and all of them are sung out by school children after wooden balls bearing the numbers roll out of a large golden tumbler.

This year, it was about two-and-a-half hours before the luckiest numbers emerged.

Prizes range from the face value of the ticket to the first prize.

The lottery is billed as the world's richest for the total sum of prize money dished out, although other lotteries have bigger individual top prizes.

Smaller shares

Vic's victorious lottery office sold tickets to individuals and to bars and restaurants, which as per Spanish custom then turned around and sold them to customers, either as they were or divvying them up into smaller shares.

Vic restaurant owner Carme Criviller did that, selling 10-euro shares that ended up fetching euro180 million (US$216 million) in winnings for employees and customers.

Criviller and her husband won euro1.2 million (US$1.4 million). But two of her 10 employees, a cook and a waitress named Diana and Ana, decided not to gamble "because they are antilottery."

"I think we are going to have to do something for them, give them a gift," Criviller told Efe. *AP*

Filipino grade schooler wins WTO design contest

From page A1

Mary Loise's design was used for the postcards and welcome cards given out to WTO delegates.

"We didn't know it was a big thing until we saw [the members of the media] at the awarding [ceremony]," recalled her father, Hong Kong-based architect Luisito Magno.

"She cried when she got the award because she was not used to all the attention," Magno said, amused at his daughter's reaction.

Always drawing

Mary Loise's shy nature was apparent in most of the pictures—flinching in the flash of the cameras, obviously uncomfortable in the limelight.

"At home, she would just draw or read Bible stories. She loved to go to Sunday School," Magno said.

Perhaps having observed her father's work, Mary Loise would draw on the white board attached to their front door every day before heading to her classes.

She attends the Sir Ellis Kadorie Primary School, a semi-private institution in Causeway Bay, where Filipinos make up about 10 percent of the student population.

Mary Loise has often been recognized by the school for her art works and her academic performance, but the WTO card award is the most prestigious yet.

"She's always drawing something. Sometimes I have to tell her to stop and attend to her other school assignments," Magno said.

Drawing entries to the WTO Welcome Card design contest was a school assignment.

Launched last month, the contest was opened to all primary school students in Hong Kong Island and the New Territories.

From the Hello Kitty and Disney princesses she loved to draw, Mary Loise shifted to flags—the Hong Kong SAR flag, in particular—for the school assignment.

She and her father later came up with the idea of handshakes encircling the flag, to signify the host territory's welcome to people from all over the world.

Well-adjusted

Mary Loise was one of several winners who were honored at the Educational Bureau building in Northpoint, but her design—originally done in crayon on A4 bond paper—was the only one used for the postcards and welcome cards.

Magno has been working in Hong Kong for the past 11 years. Mary Loise and the rest of the family relocated there only two years ago.

"She has adjusted well. She has Chinese playmates. She even speaks and writes Cantonese better than I do," the father said of the elder of his two daughters.

WTO conference

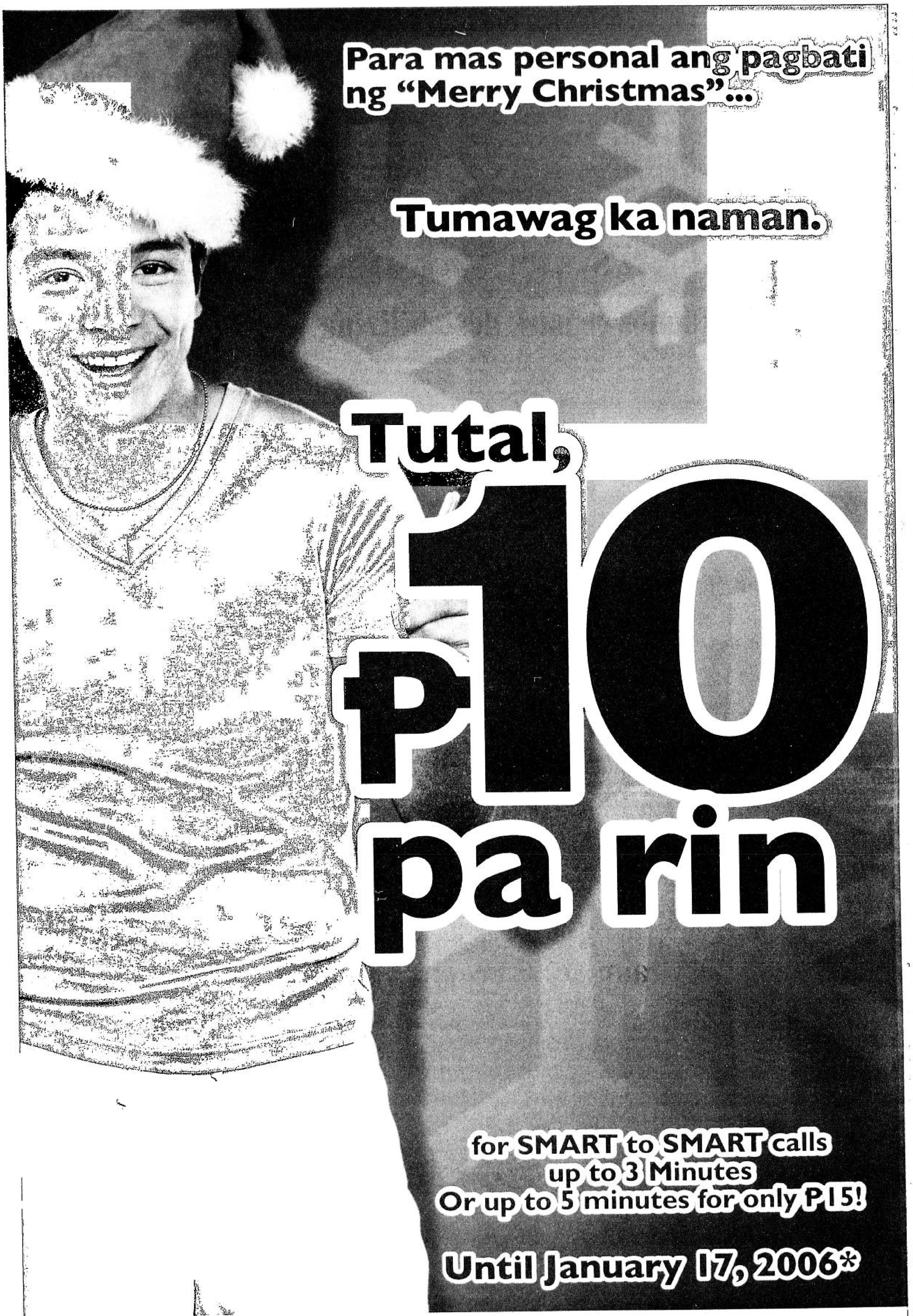
The Magnos came home to the Philippines last week, around the same time that trade officials, experts and activists returned from the WTO conference.

The family is spending the holidays in Santiago City in Isabela, with relatives on Magno's mother's side.

According to Magno, Mary Loise had yet to declare what she would want to be someday.

But from the looks of it, the shy one's future is pretty much well-drawn.

THE YOUNG artist arrives with her parents and younger sister at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. ROGER MARGALLO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A SECURITY officer and a sniffing dog scan the luggage of passengers at the South Harbor in Manila. People are rushing to go home to their provinces to celebrate Christmas with their families.

REM ZAMORA

GMA ally says Ramos remark destabilizing

From page A1

a federal-type parliamentary system.

The 77-year-old Ramos called on Ms Arroyo to take a stand on the issue by Jan. 1, or he would withdraw his support from her administration. He cautioned Ms Arroyo that a delay would exacerbate tensions sparked by the "Hello Garci" controversy in June that led to an impeachment attempt against her over allegations she stole last year's elections.

The commission was created by Ms Arroyo to propose to Congress amendments to the Constitution. Its handpicked members submitted its recommendations last week.

Barking up wrong tree

Deputy Speaker for the Visayas Raul del Mar said Ramos was "barking up the wrong tree," stressing that it was up to Congress to act on the commission's proposal.

"That is putting things out of order," said the Lakas representative from Cebu City.

Skating questions on the Ramos declaration, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said "it is neither the time nor the season to stir the political pot."

Both Bunye and Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the no-election proposal was subject to the approval of Congress and the people in a plebiscite to be called if lawmakers adopt it.

"In the meantime, let us not lose sight of the more important political and economic reforms that are being proposed," Ermita said.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez echoed the position of Bunye and Ermita, telling reporters in an ambush interview that it was unfair for Ramos to take Ms Arroyo to task for the work of the 55-member commission.

Gonzalez said the way Ramos expressed his views, it was as if he was saying that Ms Arroyo was "dictating" to the commission.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson urged Ramos to join the opposition demand for Ms Arroyo to step down "before it's too late."

Ramos was had

"Obviously too smart for politicians, (Ramos and Speaker Jose de Venecia) have been had by (Ms Arroyo). They should have known that (Ms Arroyo) never had any intention of fulfilling her part of the bargain that they struck on July 8, when they came to her rescue," Lacson said.

He said that on July 8, Ms Arroyo was already on the verge of leaving Malacañang following the mass resignation of key Cabinet officials and the withdrawal of support of Senate President Franklin Drilon and ex-President Corazon Aquino.

However, Lacson said, Ramos and De Venecia saved Ms Arroyo when they proclaimed their support for her in exchange for agreeing to amend the 1987 Constitution to provide her with a graceful exit by 2007.

The lawyers group Counsels for the Defense of Liberties said that if the ConCom amendments were ratified, Ms Arroyo could not be booted out. It said Ms Arroyo's tenure until 2010 would have been enshrined in the new Constitution's transitory provisions.

Bring it on—Gordon

Sen. Richard Gordon said neither the House nor the Senate was bound to accept the commission's recommendation. "Bring it on," said the chair of the committee on constitutional amendments. "It will be subjected to debate."

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said the commission was in effect telling lawmakers to ignore a fundamental republican rule enshrined in the 1987 Constitution.

"Senators and congressmen are prohibited from rewarding themselves with any government position created by virtue of their official act," Pimentel said.

Businessmen not only want elections in 2007 but also the revamp of the Commission on Elections to ensure that the upcoming polls would be honest and credible unlike the disputed 2004 elections.

Former Finance Secretary Ramon del Rosario Jr. called on Filipinos to rally behind Ramos.

"Like it or not, elections are at the heart of our democratic system," said Del Rosario, who served under Ramos.

Revamp Comelec

Businessman Raul T. Concepcion said scrapping the 2007 elections was "immoral."

Del Rosario and Concepcion said that government should focus on how to ensure that the elections in 2007 would be different from the 2004 elections.

"The Commission on Elections should be revamped and competent, honest and credible commissioners should be installed. If we do this, by all means we should have an election in 2007," Del Rosario said. *With reports from Norman Bordadora, Christine O. Avendaño, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Armand N. Nocum in Manila; and Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

ConCom minority report slams 'consultation system'

By Norman Bordadora

SEVEN DELEGATES WHO voted against the Consultative Commission's recommendation to set up a parliamentary system have issued a minority report proposing the retention of the presidential government with a unicameral legislature.

The seven dissenters said in their report to President Macapagal-Arroyo that the majority position was "based on deeply flawed and faulty arguments."

They added that "the system of 'consultations,' as conducted, did not allow for an adequate airing of the relevant issues and that the results being reported by the commission cannot therefore reflect the informed opinions of those 'consulted.'"

The minority report was signed by Commissioners Espina, Anthony Acevedo, Rene Azurin, Donald Dee, Jose Leviste Jr., James Marty Lim and Jose Villanueva. A copy of the report was released to the INQUIRER.

"Moreover, we feel that the commission's interpretation of the results of [the] 'consultations' is highly questionable," it said.

The report said the fusion of the executive and legislative branches of government in parliament "concentrates too much power in the hands of politicians."

"The so-called internal checks that might originate from the opposition parties in Parliament are believed inadequate and probably work only in theory, particularly in the Philippine situation where party affiliations are rarely based on hard principle and politicians often belong to the same social circle," the report said.

"Even in countries with mature parliamentary systems, abuse of the enormous power vested in parliamentary governments is actually fairly common. Cronyism tends to flower in a parliamentary environment," it added.

The report added that the empowerment of local government units could be accomplished even without a shift to a federal government. This particular argument against a federal shift was never adequately addressed, it said.

It said local autonomy was already provided in the existing Constitution, including the power to impose taxes. Peripheral issues could be addressed by simple legislation or administrative fiat, it said.

In its working draft, the dissenters proposed a unicameral presidential system, with a nationally elected president and vice president, and a Congress composed of regional and district representatives.

CBCP head extols love amid crises

From page A1

In his own message for the Yuletide, Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales asked the faithful to be more optimistic and to continue working for peace.

Quoting the late Pope Paul VI, Rosales said peace was the new name for development, which "is not won in battle or debate."

Everyone's role

"When people are helped out of a less human situation to a more humane life, when they are freed from the chains of ignorance, hunger, poverty, selfishness and sin, then there is the unassailable movement toward development or progress," he said.

Rosales added that everyone—rich or poor, strong or weak, leaders or followers—played an important role in promoting and safeguarding peace.

"Today, there is little chance for people to triumph in a world where more individuals are hungry, poor, abused, often lied to and taken advantage of," he said.

The archbishop said the process could start by adopting a positive perspective on life. People should focus on the good, rather than the bad, he said.

"Christmas is the trumpet blast for all, announcing the movement from less human to more human, from selfish to benevolent. The relatedness of life has begun," he said.

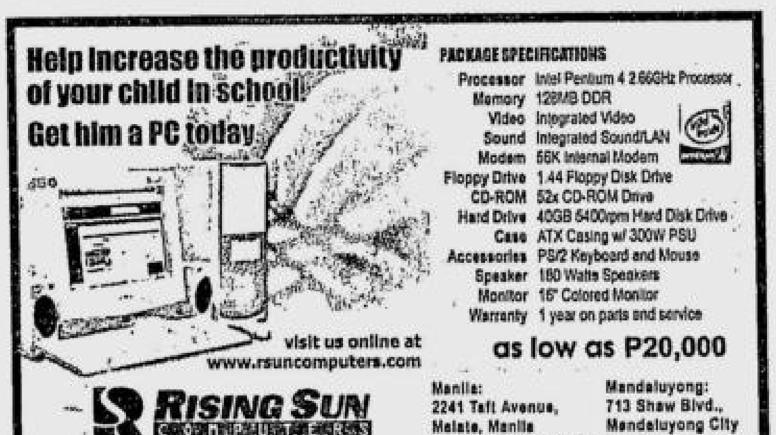
Servant leadership

Lagdameo said everyone's work toward peace and order "is not only a gift of the Savior to us but also our gift to the Savior and to one another."

Barely a month after assuming the top CBCP post, Lagdameo has been batting for the principle of "servant leadership" to help achieve national transformation.

In his first speech as CBCP president early this month, he said that leaders should be accountable and, as such, should "not sweep the truth under the rug."

"We can transform our country through servant leadership whose core trait is serving the people with integrity of heart, credible lifestyle, and accountable and transparent disposition of resources," he said in his Christmas message.



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4 'antijueteng' mayors found to be coddlers

From page A1

numbers racket—have turned out to be protectors of gambling lords.

The Luzon mayors got the awards from Archbishop Oscar Cruz's Krusadang Bayan Laban sa Jueteng, whose 62 chapters were monitoring illegal gambling operations in the country.

Since 2002, the group has been handing out citations to public officials, including police and military officers, for working to eradicate the multibillion-peso underground lottery.

Cruz refused to identify the mayors. He also did not ask them to return plaques of recognition.

Decency plea

The Lingayen-Dagupan archbishop just advised other public officials who might have been mistakenly cited to refuse the award "out of decency."

"It can happen that someone is awarded but afterward is tempted to receive payola," Cruz told the INQUIRER yesterday.

"In cases like this, they should have the decency to refuse or return the award."

In the case of the four mayors, he said his group had to take the word of the Department of the Interior and Local Government, which vouched for their integrity and contributions in the antijueteng campaign.

Cruz said he could not get a confirmation from his group's chapters monitoring the activities of the four mayors at that time.

Within a week after the mayors received their awards, he said he got a call from two bishops telling him that his group had made a mistake.

Quoting the prelates, Cruz said two of the mayors were in fact receiving hefty amounts of protection money from gambling operators.

True color

A month later, Cruz said two other bishops wrote him a letter, exposing what he claimed was the true color of the two other mayors.

Asked if he had regrets for unwittingly awarding jueteng protectors, he said he had none.

"It was a mistake," he said. "But it was not a mistake that hurt people."

The annual awards are particularly important for Cruz and his group. They are their way of encouraging community leaders to join the campaign against the illegal numbers game.

The group managed to relax after successfully jump-starting a government effort to eliminate jueteng operations in the country.

On Wednesday, the prelate expressed disappointment over a report that organized jueteng was back, particularly in Quezon province. *(See related story in Across the Nation, Page A13.)*

He took President Macapagal-Arroyo to task, saying she should have used all law enforcement agencies at her disposal to keep jueteng at bay.

THE VALDES CLAN REUNION ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 8, 2006

The eleventh annual reunion of the Valdes Clan will be held on Sunday, January 8, 2006, at Ely Narciso's orchard at Barangay Mining, in Angeles, Pampanga. There will be signs to the site from Angeles Exit 81 of the North Expressway. The Valdes blues, who are descended from the Francisca Valdes de Jesus branch, will be primarily responsible for this year's affair, which will last from registration at 9:00 o'clock in the morning until 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon, more or less.

For more information, including the special car pool service available from Quezon City for that day, call Gina at 725-4509 during office hours. Other contact persons are Martin Reynoso (mobile 0918-918-8496) for the *blues*, Tessie Coronel-Santos (924-2075) and Lulu Guanzon (365-8175) for the *reds*, Maryanne de Leon (522-2874) and Susie Arroyo (687-4025) for the *greens*, and Aye Yap-Azurin (821-5092) and Sally Henson-Naguiat (373-8466) for the *yellows*.

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

S. Korea panel says stem-cell result fabricated

SEOUL—SOUTH KOREA'S MOST FAMOUS SCIENTIST QUIT UNder a cloud on Friday and could face prosecution after investigators said results in a landmark 2005 paper on producing tailored embryonic stem cells were intentionally fabricated.

A panel from Seoul National University has been examining the work of Hwang Woo-suk, hitherto regarded in South Korea as a hero for bringing the country to the forefront of stem-cell and cloning studies—and the world the first cloned dog.

His reputation lay ruined on Friday, and many in the country felt acutely embarrassed. The nine-member panel said in a statement the fabrication was "major misconduct that undermines the fundamentals of science."

It had launched the investigation after some of Hwang's former collaborators said key findings in their paper were false.

"Based on these findings, the data in 2005 was intentionally fabricated, not an accidental error," said Roe Jung-hye, the chief of Seoul National University's research office, at a televised news conference.

"It is difficult for Professor Hwang not to avoid taking major responsibility," Roe said, adding that the scale of the researcher's direct involvement was not yet clear. Hwang soon responded, but gave no immediate explanation.

"I am stepping down as a professor at Seoul National University to apologize for causing such big shocks and disappointment," he said in brief televised comments. "But I'd like to repeat patient-tailored embryonic stem cells are South Korean technology. All of you will confirm it."

Shares in South Korean biotechnology firms did not react significantly to the panel's findings, and a Finance Ministry official said there was unlikely to be an impact on the sovereign ratings of the country, Asia's fourth-largest economy.

Prosecutors said they would question Hwang when the panel issued a final report. Officials have not said when that will be.

Renowned in science circles for his stem-cell work, Hwang is best known to others for leading the team that created the world's first cloned dog, an Afghan hound called Snuppy.

"It is a heartbreaking turn for science and Korea. Without trust, we just cannot imagine science," said Laurie Zoloth, a specialist in bioethics for Northwestern University, by telephone. "This is utterly unacceptable."

Roe said the panel would now also investigate the dog cloning and a 2004 academic paper on cloning the first human embryos for research that has also fallen under suspicion.

The panel found there were only two stem cell lines in the paper published in May 2005 in the US periodical Science, not 11 as the authors had said.

Of the other nine stem cell lines, four clusters died because of a contamination accident in January 2005 and cannot be verified as tailor-made stem cells.

Reuters

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Scandal raises questions about 'hurry-hurry' culture

By Burt Herman

HWANG

SEOUL — SIX-DAY morning-to-night workweeks. Companies trumpeting ever-bigger flat-screen TVs. A government that wants to make its country a "hub" for everything from finance to robots. South Korea is fiercely committed to being No. 1—and doing it yesterday.

As South Korean scientist Hwang Woo-suk resigned his job as professor Friday after Seoul National University found he faked research results, some observers partly blamed the country's always-hurrying culture, accompanied by its deep national pride and craving for international recognition.

"The Hwang Woo-suk case is a good example that in Korean society there still exists remnants of the past experience of fast growth," said Park Gil-sung, a Korea University sociology professor. "It's a problem of our social system that desires fast results."

Hwang emerged from relative obscurity to announce the world's first cloned human embryo in 2004. This year he claimed to have cloned stem cells tailor-made for individual patients with unprecedented efficiency, after producing the world's first cloned dog.

Stem cells—master cells that can grow other bodily tissues—are seen as a hope for possible treatments for daunting medical problems like Alzheimer's disease and paralysis.

As Hwang announced one stride after another, his country cheered him on and dubbed him the "pride of Korea."

In June, the government designated the veterinarian South Korea's first-ever "top scientist," granting him funding and assigning him a diplomat to help with international contacts. National flag-carrier Korean Air gave him and his wife free first-class flights for a decade.

The Ministry of Science and Technology pledged this year to make South Korea a world scientific power and to "provide a liberal and stable research environment to brilliant researchers and generate the second, the third Hwang Woo-suk."

Hwang's work "grew into a state project with government backing and then became the people's project, adding a massive weight of national expectation," the Chosun Ilbo newspaper wrote in a recent editorial.

"That very fact simply short-circuited any stringent verification procedures by scientists and the government," it said. "Scientists kept mum because they saw hope in one of their own becoming a national hero, and the government was happy to bask in reflected glory without asking too many questions."

After Hwang last month admitted ethics lapses—accepting eggs from female workers at his lab—supporters still stood by him. Hundreds of women have offered their eggs.

But Hwang last week acknowledged "fatal errors" in his work, and on Friday he resigned after his university said he had been involved in a deliberate deception to fake DNA test results.

"I suspect it's a question of whether nationalism and the public spotlight kind of swept them along a little bit," said Michael Breen, author of the book "The Koreans: Who They Are, What They Want, Where Their Future Lies."

"In that kind of rush to be first, they kind of cut corners," he said.

Speed is such a part of South Korean culture that its people often use the catch phrase "ppalli ppalli"—"hurry hurry."

It's tangible in Seoul's hellish traffic, daredevil bus drivers and people's love of downing shots of alcohol in one gulp to get drunk fast.

The dynamic culture has its upside, having helped rebuild the country from the ruins of the 1950-53 Korean War into the world's 11th-largest economy.

Samsung Electronics and other South Korean companies lead the world in making memory chips, flat-screen displays and mobile phones. Media herald their progress as a source of national pride.

South Korea "doesn't get to where (it is) today without hustling," said Korea Times columnist Mike Weisbart. "There's still way more dynamism going on here, and much more lethargy in the West."

AP

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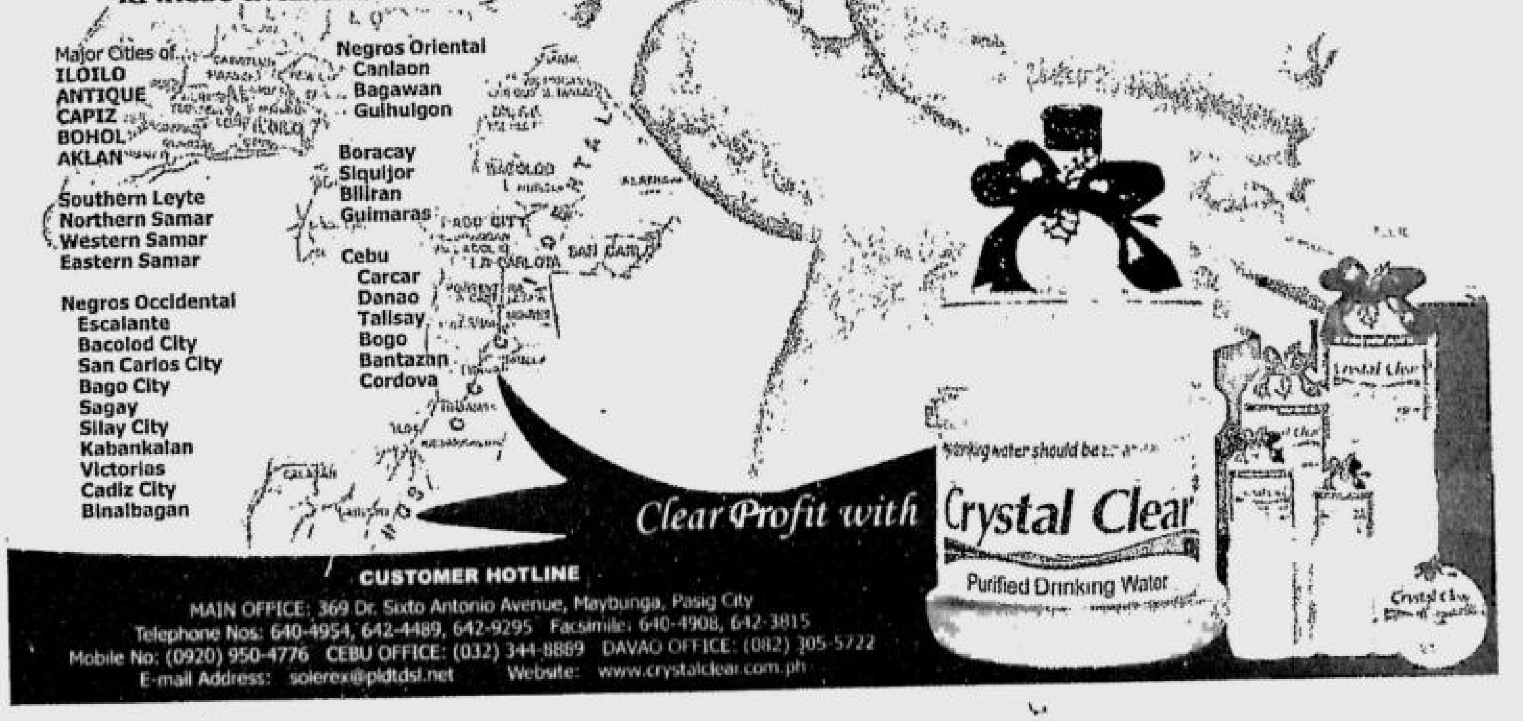

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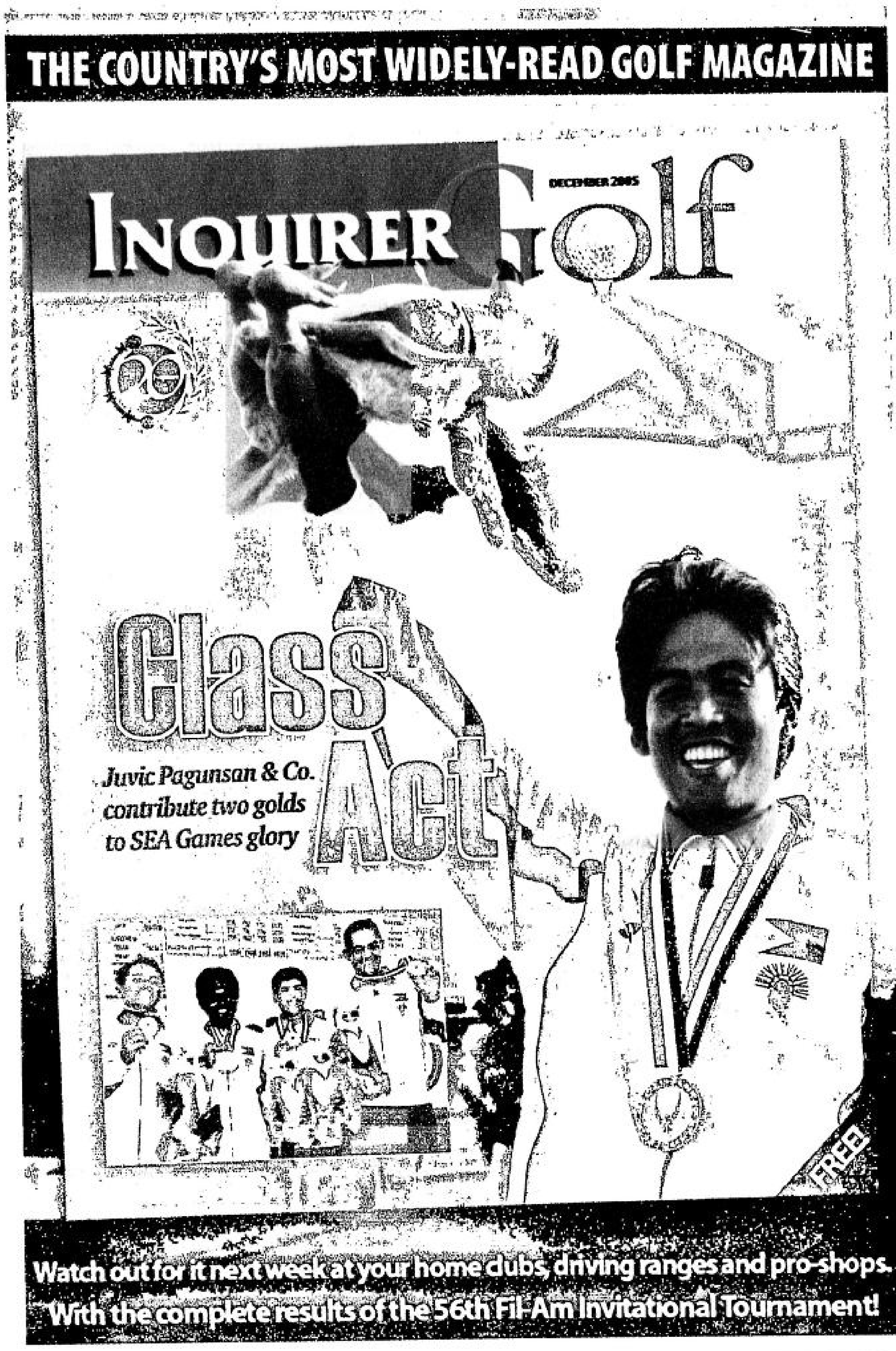
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UK troops could start leaving Iraq next year, says Blair

BASRA, IRAQ—PRIME MINISTER Tony Blair, on a lightning trip to Iraq, said on Thursday that the situation was entirely different from a year ago and signaled Britain could start scaling down its troop presence in six months.

Blair, on his fourth trip to Iraq since the 2003 US-led invasion, said good progress was being made in training Iraqi security and police forces to protect the country.

The ability of Iraqis to manage the country's security is the key condition for the 8,000 British troops, most of them stationed in the southeast near Basra, to return home.

Asked if six months was a viable time for a withdrawal to begin, Blair said: "If everything goes to plan. It is our strategy, we want to draw down our own forces."

"This is a completely different situation from the situation a year ago," Blair told reporters at Shaiba logistics base near Basra, home to half the British contingent in Iraq.

But he said they would only leave once Iraqis were able to keep the peace. "You don't set an arbitrary timetable. You assess when the job is done," he said.

Blair met US and British military chiefs to discuss the security situation after last week's Iraqi election.

Gen. George Casey, US military commander in Iraq, told him that by summer 2006, Iraqis will be in charge of 75 percent of security in some areas.

Friday's Times newspaper said Britain had stopped military patrols in half the area under its control in southern Iraq ahead of a planned pullout.

Citing unnamed defense sources, the report said 1,100 soldiers had returned to barracks after being removed from frontline duties. A defense ministry spokesperson in London declined to comment.

Blair told the troops they were helping to secure Iraq, the region and the wider world against terrorism.

NY strike cost $1 billion

NEW YORK—NEW YORK TRANSIT workers ended their crippling strike on Thursday after millions of commuters endured three days of frustration and city businesses suffered huge financial losses.

Frustrated commuters trod home on foot, or braved massive traffic jams in cars, one more time late Thursday as transit workers began restarting the country's largest urban public transportation system for the Friday morning commute.

Some tried to enter subway stations, only to be turned back. "Probably not before 12 (midnight) (1/8) 0400 GMT Friday (3/8)," said a clerk at the central Manhattan Spring Street station.

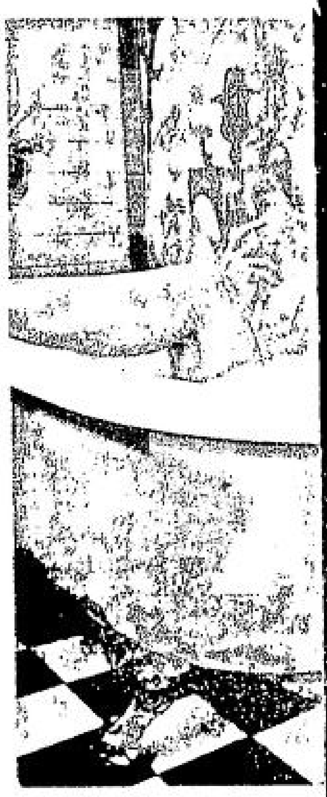
Earlier in the afternoon, the Transport Workers Union executive voted to end the strike and to resume negotiations with the transit system management even without securing a new contract.

Facing the threat of jail for what has been ruled an illegal strike, union leaders dropped a demand that authorities scrap proposed changes to pension benefits.

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said Thursday afternoon that it would take 10 to 18 hours to get the system's 6,200 subway cars and 4,900 buses fully in service.

The vast transit network, which carries about seven million passengers each day, "can't be turned on or off with a flip of the switch," he said.

New York had passed a difficult test with "flying colors" but Bloomberg told reporters the strike had taken a financial toll on the city. *AFP*



"The only way to do that
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WORLD

Toxic river slick i

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Anomalous behav

LONDON—Police and fire crews
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Increased Tamiflu dose for bird flu considered

GENEVA—THE SWISS PHARMACEUTICAL group Roche said Thursday that increased doses of Tamiflu may be needed to treat human cases of virulent bird flu, after a study indicated that the H5N1 virus had developed resistance to its flagship anti-influenza drug.

It may also be necessary to combine the drug, which public health authorities consider to be a frontline defense against a flu pandemic deriving from bird flu, with other antiviral agents to treat H5N1, the company said in a statement.

"Roche agrees that other treatment regimens for the H5N1 virus need to be explored, including higher dose and/or longer duration of treatment with Tamiflu, or a combination of antiviral agents."

Roche said that safety data supported the use of higher doses.

Clinical research was already under way with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US National Institutes of Health to assess the effectiveness of a higher dose, before the study on drug resistance was published, Roche spokesperson Martina Rupp said.

The pharmaceutical giant is also ready to explore "potential combinations" of Tamiflu with "additional therapies" to treat H5N1. *AFP*

NOT AS FAMOUS AS UNCLE—Wafah Dufour, niece of Osama bin Laden, poses for GQ Magazine. Dufour, who took her mother's maiden name after Sept. 11, 2001, is an aspiring musician struggling to make a name for herself. REUTERS

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ior' at nuke plant

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a pond at the plant, where staff
unusual. *Reuters*

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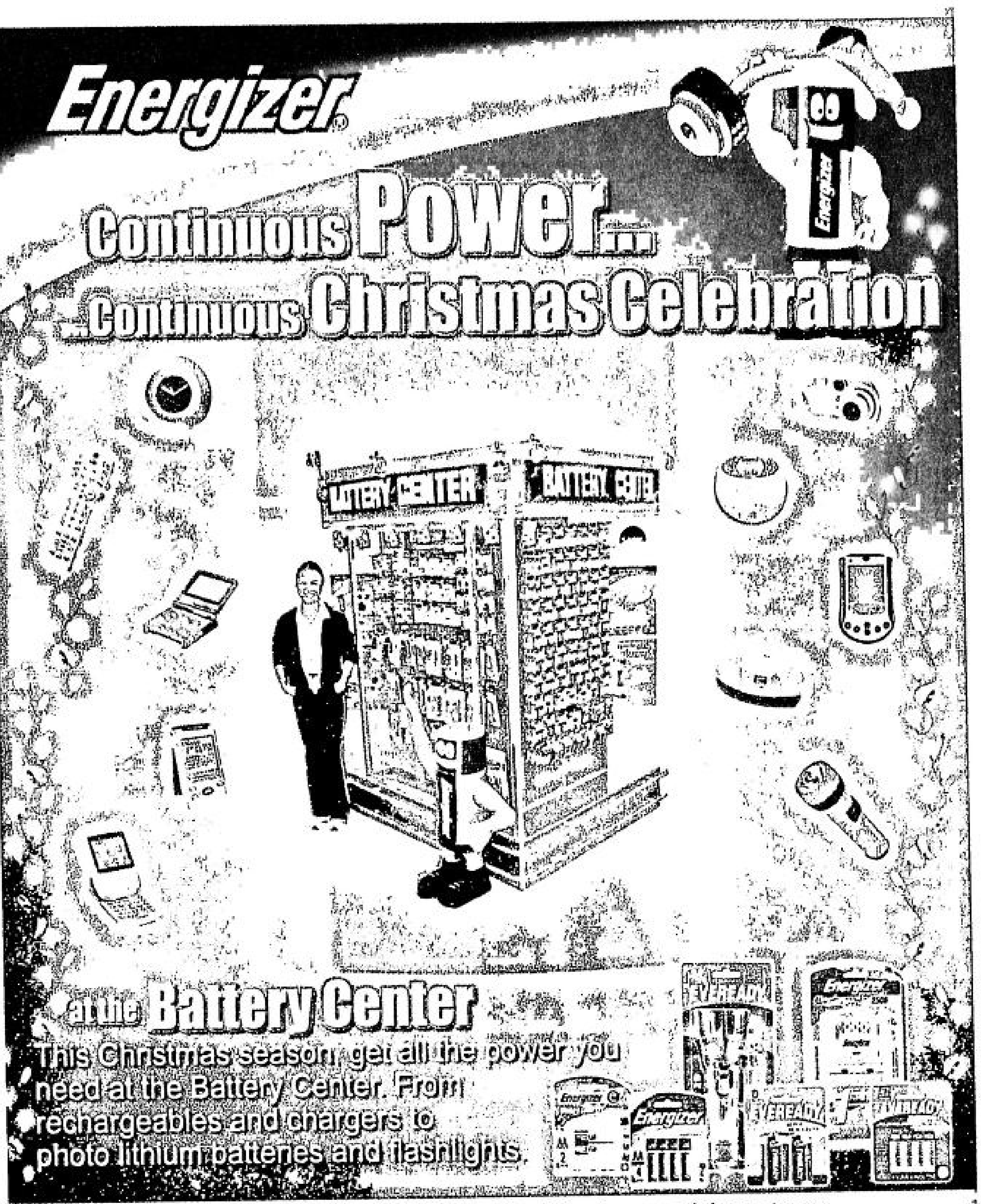

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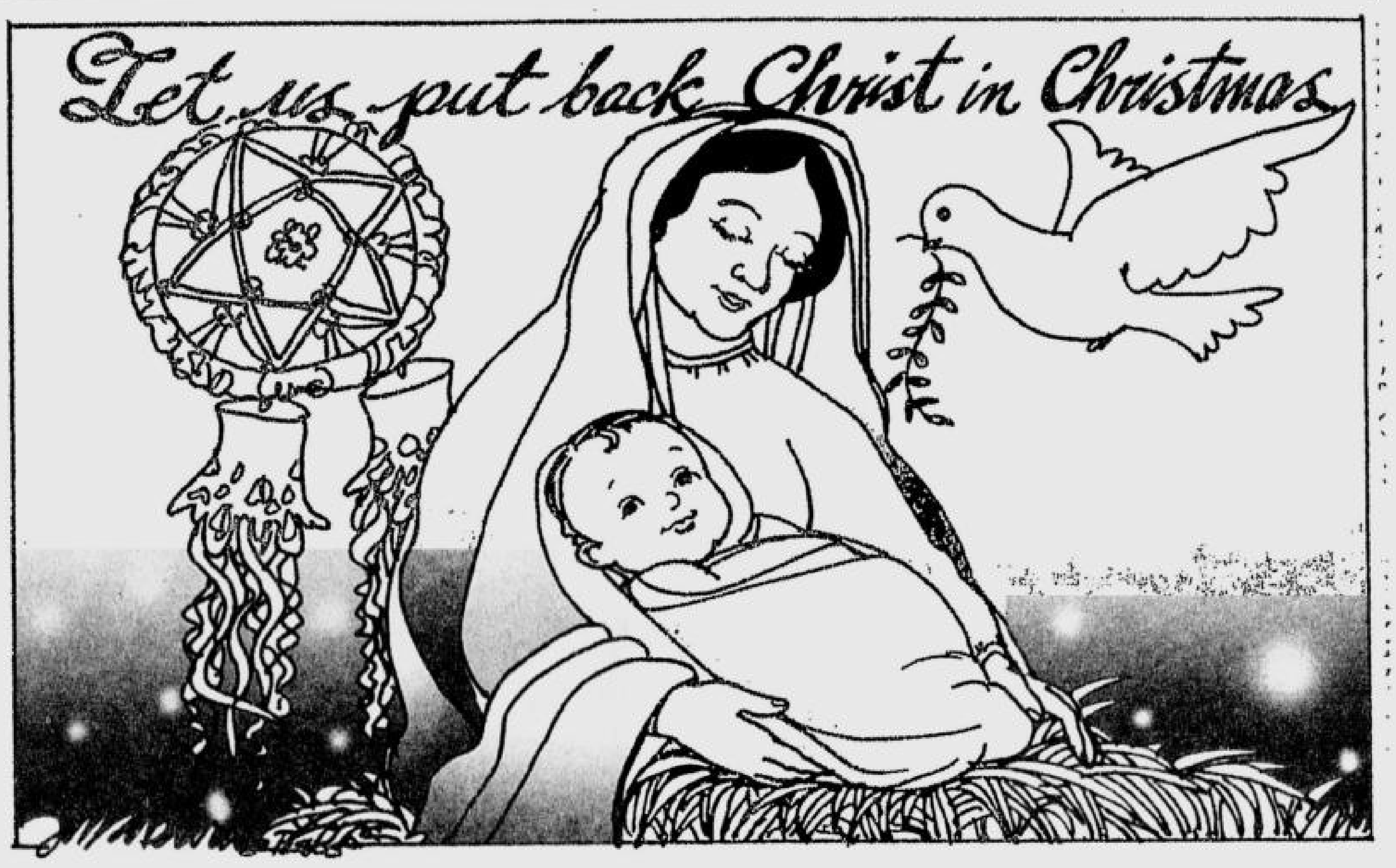

Let us put back Christ in Christmas

Adoption

EDITORIAL

JOSEPH, THE FOSTER FATHER OF JESUS, WAS the subject of an article in the Dec. 19, 2005 issue of Time Magazine. The article recounts the evolution of Christian devotion to Mary's husband, despite the few instances he is mentioned in the New Testament. Today, of course, for Roman Catholics the world over, Saint Joseph is the patron of workers and protector of the Church. Even Protestants, according to Time, are developing an appreciation for Joseph, who provides inspiration for his having accepted God's will by marrying a woman, Mary, with child, and for protecting his wife and son thereafter.

It is, however, Joseph's identity as foster, or adoptive, father of Jesus that seems to resonate most in the modern world, where more and more families are less concerned with blood inheritance. In "12 Little Things Every Filipino Can Do To Help Our Country," a slender volume by Alexander Lacson that has been quietly making the rounds of concerned individuals, the final "little thing" is: "Adopt a scholar, or adopt a poor child." This remarkable little book is increasingly becoming popular because it combines practicality with idealism. It proposes that adopting takes many forms, and two kinds particularly beneficial to the country involves scholars or making an abandoned child part of the family.

The book suggests adopting a scholar by paying for a child's education, but also asks that assistance go beyond the financial. An increasingly rootless generation of young Filipinos needs effective nurturing and mentoring, and so much can be done to help instill good values in the youth by taking the time to actively work with them. Or families can support organizations that provide scholarships; or go further and participate in organizations, such as the one established by our founding chair, Eugenia Apostol. Her Foundation for Worldwide People Power has been undertaking an Adopt-a-School project for some years now; by helping it, a concerned Filipino or group of Filipinos, can help make possible the rehabilitation and improvement of schools in depressed areas.

It is with simplicity, but earnestness, that Lacson makes a plea for yet another kind of adoption: taking a child into the home. As he puts it, the thought of adopting a child can fill families with fear: "The fear of bringing up a total stranger in your home… The fear that the child may come from a line of murderers, thieves, liars. The fear that, with the new adopted mouth, you may not be able to provide much to your own kids."

He insists, however, "that it is at this point when the Christian in us knocks. The sacrifice we make to save a poor soul, an innocent child, and to give him a world where there's food, love and a secure future, is a worthwhile one." It certainly was one that Joseph, betrothed to a woman named Mary, had to make, and did make.

The Nativity story should be familiar to all by now. Less familiar perhaps are the Advent readings that mention Joseph's concerns that getting married to a woman, who was pregnant with a child that wasn't his, would cause scandal; or that just as Mary surrendered herself to God's will, so did Joseph. It was the adoptive paternity of Jesus, his having Joseph, a member of the House of David, that made Christ heir of David and King of the Jews.

In the Philippines, there remains a certain reluctance to either consider or discuss adoption. Yet in tens of thousands of Filipino homes on this, the most family-centric of eves, there are bright, smiling young faces who find their smiles reflected in the faces of parents that aren't theirs biologically, but who are their parents by deliberate choice. In their faces are mirrored the unquestioning hope and love—in a word, the faith—the shepherds, angels and wise men witnessed in a refugee family in Bethlehem. There, taking care of a newborn son, in swaddling clothes, with only a manger for a bed, was Mary, and her husband, Joseph, the most famous foster father of them all.

At a time when those who have much seem to have more and more, and those with little seem to have less and less, a small book serves as a reminder of the Good Book, with its injunction that to whom much is given, much is expected.

Conduct unbecoming the three departments

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

I HESITATE TO SAY THIS ON THE DAY before Christmas but I would like to unburden myself of all unkind thoughts, if only for now, so I will have only goodwill to all men and women (and children too) tomorrow in keeping with the Christian spirit of the day.

First let me recall the Senate of yesteryears where trod Quezon, Osmeña, Roxas, Sumulong, Laurel, Recto, Tañada, Salonga, Diokno, Aquino and other great parliamentarians. That Senate is no more, its rich record of eminent membership and patriotic accomplishments now obscured by the drossiness of the present chamber.

The Senate now is a far cry from its distinguished predecessor. It no longer deserves to be called the Upper House in contrast with Lower House which is still appropriately named but not for its physical location. The membership of the Senate in recent years has been cheapened by many unfit and even ludicrous members whose names need not be mentioned here for their widely known derision. To be fair, though, it is not fully their fault for being so shamelessly presumptuous. It is the people who elevated them to their undeserved seats who are mostly to blame for turning that once august chamber into a shabby council.

The House of Representatives never enjoyed the prestige of the Senate before, and it remains disdained, indeed more so now, not only because of its generally mediocre membership but also because of its generally disgraceful conduct. The qualifications of many of its members are more questionable than those of some senators, who are at least elected nationwide and not from minor fiefdoms easily bought or terrorized. The Lower House is the demanding glutton of the pork barrel and is known to be the obedient servant of Malacañang with its abundant persuasions. To take but one sordid example, its mercenary influence proved effective in preventing the President's impeachment last August despite the serious accusations.

There are still a number of senators and representatives who are worthy of the offices they are discharging with exemplary dedication and altruism. But they constitute a meager exception that is not enough to salvage the rest of their colleagues from the general disapprobation of civic-minded citizens. The Congress of today is a disgrace to the Philippine Republic. No wonder it is sought to be replaced by a new Parliament, but the trouble is that it is likely to be filled by the same rascals now befouling the legislature.

Malacañang, which is the official residence of the President of the Philippines, is now tenanted by a person whose election last year is highly suspect. The main reason is the Garci tapes where she is alleged to have called for the falsification of the election returns to give her a million-vote margin over her closest rival. To clear all doubts about the legitimacy of her title, she should have spared no effort to locate the fugitive Virgilio Garcillano to deny the charge. She did not, not seriously. Other irregularities having been exposed in the Executive Department, she issued EO 464 prohibiting Cabinet members and other officials under her control from appearing before any legislative investigation without her permission. Compared to all our previous Presidents, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has received the lowest approval rating in the surveys, and it is likely to further decrease even as more corruption and the cost of living continue to rise.

What about the Supreme Court and the other courts of justice? The Judiciary is the least blamable of the three major branches, but it is of course not entirely blameless. Although I used to sit on the high tribunal, I have not hesitated to criticize it in this column for some decisions that I felt were erroneous. Dissent, after all, is a healthy ingredient of justice. But the Supreme Court cannot deny the several times it copped-out and left the lower courts to decide serious constitutional questions that it could have directly examined and resolved without needless delay. And there are cases that have been gathering dust in its dockets for years, not to mention some others that have never been decided, correctly or not, against parties apparently enjoying special favors. Although there are thankfully no serious charges of corruption in the High Tribunal, the independence of its members, particularly from the Chief Executive, is another question.

The proponents of the so-called Cha-cha are saying that the revision of the 1987 Charter will solve all the shortcomings of the present government. That is an absurd argument meant to cloak their own personal ambitions to remain in unmerited power. Changing the Constitution will not correct the maladies of our officialdom. It is changing the current officialdom that is the answer to the not insoluble problems of our country.

Curious reasoning

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

SHOCK. DISMAY. OUTRAGE. DESPAIR. THESE were what I felt upon learning of the decision of the Court of Appeals upholding the decision of Judge Amelita Tolentino, finding Hubert Webb et al. guilty of the Vizconde rape and homicide. I know that the Court of Appeals is more known for corruption than for the probity of its decisions, but this one took my breath away.

Take what it said about Jessica Alfaro's testimony: "It is also noteworthy to add that what makes Alfaro's testimony worthy of belief is the marked compatibility between such testimony and the physical evidence. Physical evidence is evidence of the highest order. It speaks eloquently (*sic*) than a hundred witnesses."

Excuse me. The physical evidence showed a bloody handprint on the ceiling of Carmela Vizconde's bedroom, to which Alfaro made no reference. The physical evidence showed that you could not see what was going on in Carmela's bedroom from the door, because there was a little foyer in between, but Alfaro claimed that from the door of the bedroom, she saw Hubert humping the victim. The physical evidence showed that the Vizconde house was locked from the inside, but Alfaro claimed that Carmela opened the door and the gate to the Webb group, including herself. The physical evidence showed a video of Hubert Webb in the United States at the time of the murder, taken by a tourist. Alfaro claimed that she was with him at the time.

All these are quite apart from other inconsistencies in Alfaro's testimony in two affidavits, to wit: In one, she claimed that she had not met Carmela before June 29, 1991 (the day of the murder), while in a later affidavit, she claimed that they met at a party in February. In the earlier affidavit, she claimed that she did not see the three dead victims, she just read about them the following day, while in the later one, she claimed that she saw two dead persons on the bed, and Hubert on top of Carmela on the floor. In the first affidavit, she did not see the act of rape, while in the second, she saw Hubert pumping Carmela (with bare buttocks, while Carmela's mouth was gagged). In one, she never entered the house, in another, she entered through the dirty kitchen.

The DOJ did not consider these inconsistencies enough to erode the credibility of Alfaro—they were just "misdescriptions." And the Court of Appeals seems to agree. Tell me, dear reader, whether you agree with the Court of Appeals, or whether you agree with me that it shows Alfaro as an incredible witness, with two completely different versions.

If the Court of Appeals is lenient with the prosecution, it is the exact opposite with the defense. It points out that the United Airlines flight manifest and the airline ticket Webb presented to show that he left for the United States were "photocopies" and not the originals. Good grief. Who, in this day and age of computer technology, keeps the originals of business transactions for more than five years (1991 was when the trip occurred, while the defense part of the trial occurred more than five years later)? UA officials testified based on their computer or microfilm records. Did the Court of Appeals think that they were intimidated by then Sen. Freddie Webb into producing fake evidence?

The Court of Appeals also looks with a jaundiced eye at the certification issued by the US Immigration Service (INS) that Hubert was in the United States from March 1991 to October 1992. The fact that the INS had initially certified that it had no record of the arrival or departure of Webb, and then later produced the information after a more thorough search (i.e., involving Washington files, where all records go after five years in the field offices) was interpreted by the Court of Appeals as "a strained effort by Webb at establishing his presence in the United States in order to reinforce his flimsy alibi." Again, the Court of Appeals attributes to Senator Webb such tremendous power over US officials that he could get them to change their testimony.

But even if all the foregoing were true, says the Court of Appeals, these still "do not discount the possibility that he (Hubert) was in the Philippines at an interim period, particularly during June 29 and 30, 1991." Again, the implication is that: (1) the senator was so powerful that he could cause US records to be erased; and (2) that Hubert cold-bloodedly planned the Vizconde rape and massacre from the United States (although Alfaro intimated a drug-induced spree), came here with the precise objective in mind, and then left the next day.

The Court of Appeals then disposes of the rest of the defense testimonies cavalierly: "Besides, most of the testimonies in favor of Webb came from either relatives or close friends. It is for this reason that we regard their testimonies with an eye of suspicion for it is but natural for a close relative or friend to give weight to blood ties and close relationship in times of dire needs."

Thus does it dispose of the testimonies of then NBI Director Epimaco Velasco, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the salesman who sold Hubert a bicycle in the United States on the same day of the murder, the tourist who took a videotape of Hubert and his dad in Disneyland also around the same time.

The Court of Appeals' reasoning surely stretches credulity. To top it all, it is all praise for Tolentino, who now happens to be also a member of the Court of Appeals (some say for reasons other than merit). Is it possible that the Court of Appeals is itself guilty of "giving weight to …close relationship in times of dire needs"?

Hubert is not only **not** "guilty beyond reasonable doubt," he is totally innocent. Free him.

Two women of courage and hope

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, NATIONAL COMMISSion for Culture and the Arts executive director Cecile Guidote-Alvarez and I have been doing the non-drama portion of her "Radyo Balintataw" every Sunday at 9:15 p.m. over dzRH as a public service or "*escuela ng bayan*" show. Thus, we've featured just about everything, from micro-finance projects, problems of the Department of Education, the impeachment process and the Mindanao situation. But every Christmas and New Year, we strove to come up with something different. So one year-end, we invited professor Onofre Pagsanghan to talk about 50 years of Ateneo High School drama and how it helped shape the nation. This Christmas, we wanted to talk about man's indomitable spirit, in keeping with the season of hope as epitomized by the birth of Christ. But where would we look for symbols of hope in a largely cynical world?

Then we ran into a person with disability (PWD) and through her, we met another PWD. We taped an interview last week, and what a story of courage and hope the girls told in flawless Filipino. There were moments when Cecile and I couldn't speak as we marveled at their unbreakable spirit. Cecile couldn't help but remember her former disabled professor at St. Paul's College, Estelita Juco. Catch them tomorrow evening on dzRH.

* * *

Farida Tiongson was a well-built, fair-skinned, doe-eyed lady, who was scheduled to graduate from Miriam College in three months' time eight years ago. She looked forward to joining the ranks of professionals, and being a looker, she had her fill of the social whirl. But one day, these all changed. Her family was traveling from Laoag to Manila with her father at the wheel when they met an accident on the highway. Everyone suffered minor injuries, but Farida fractured her spine, damaging her spinal cord. She underwent a series of operations, but soon the family realized that she would never be able to move her lower limbs again or feel any sensation in them. She would be wheelchair-bound for life.

* * *

Forced to drop out, Farida recalls that the first three months were the most difficult. "I was like a child then, relearning how to get up from my bed, to balance my head and my body, to stand up, sit and walk." It was tough, but tougher still was trying to comprehend the reason behind her tragic fate.

"There was so much I wanted to do in my life," she says, recalling her period of brooding and self-pity. Her father was also disturbed by a sense of guilt for a while. Luckily the family's brooding did not last long as their deep faith in God and love and support for one another and from their church community strengthened them. Farida realized she couldn't forever be dependent on them and neither could she indulge in self-pity forever. She "continued to dream," pursuing her undergraduate studies through distance-learning at CAP College and later enrolled in a master's program in development communications at UP's Open University.

* * *

She landed a job at CAP College as a faculty checker and e-group facilitator, and later began teaching online. This semester she's teaching three subjects. In addition, she's doing background investigation on all the trainees of Convergys, the giant call center, as a verification officer of Basic Inc., a head-hunting office. She does all her work at home.

Farida is also working for the welfare of disabled persons as external vice president of the Federation of Persons with Disability Association of Quezon City (FPDAQC), an eight-year-old umbrella group that began with eight organizations after the first Philippine Wheelathon. To date it has grown to 25 member organizations which are networking to make RA 7272, the Magna Carta for the Disabled, a working reality.

Farida has adjusted to her wheelchair existence, but judging from the uncomfortable stares she still draws in the malls, she rightly assesses that PWDs have to have more exposure to the public to gain acceptance.

* * *

The friend she brought along, 28-year-old Bituin A. Hernandez, contracted tuberculosis of the spine when she was 13 and she has been wheelchair-bound since then. At first, she went through physical therapy but she had to discontinue it because it was so expensive. Had she continued, she might have walked again—and that hope remains in her heart.

But her condition never discouraged Bituin from striving for self-fulfillment. She continued with her studies at St. Paul's College in Quezon City as one of three handicapped students. Every day she would wheel herself to school from Bahay Biyaya, a boarding place for disabled students in Cubao founded by Paola Valeriana, a Belgian missionary who also founded Tahanang Walang Hagdan. After graduating in 2001, Bituin began freelance general transcription work, such as encoding for pre-need firms and transferring audio files at the 700 Club of CBS News. Today, she's an active member of the Spinal Cord Injury Foundation, trying to help other paraplegics fulfill their potentials through gainful employment.

* * *

Both Farida and Bituin attribute their indomitable spirit and success to their unwavering belief in God and in themselves. They feel happy that the first step to help the disabled has been taken with the enactment of the Magna Carta for the Disabled, thanks to handicapped former legislators such as the late Art Borjal and former Sen. Ernesto Herrera. But as Bituin pointed out, much more needs to be done to make the landmark legislation a reality by ensuring, for instance, that the public and private sectors allocate at least 5 percent of employment opportunities to PWDs. Out there, she said, are many more PWDs who are talented, smart, independent and full of life and they are searching for opportunities for self-fulfillment.

Orchids to CAP, Basic Inc. and 700 Club for opening windows of opportunity to Farida and Bituin. I think both girls would make terrific hosts for a TV show by PWDs.

'Christmas in August'

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

A MAN AFFLICTED WITH A TERMINAL ILLNESS sets out to live his last days according to the same routine he has followed for much of his uneventful life. He lives with his aging father, and looks forward to occasional visits from his married sister and her family. He also runs a neighborhood studio and photo shop, patiently attending to the needs of his customers, from schoolboys wishing to enlarge a class picture the better to appreciate their crushes, to an old woman wanting to look more attractive for her "death portrait," the framed picture that her oldest son will carry to her resting place.

His comfortable routine is suddenly broken by two events: his old flame, now married and with a child, returns to their hometown; and he meets a "meter maid" who not only becomes a regular customer but begins to work her way into his heart. His youthful crush visits him to put an end to his decades-long devotion: she asks him to take down her portrait from the display window on which he has placed pictures of the people he loves most. But his latest object of affection has an even more troubling impact: she shows signs of returning his feelings, something he cannot allow given that he has but a short time to live.

This is the synopsis of "Christmas in August," a Korean film which debuted in 1998 and won major honors in the Korean Film Awards of that year, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress and Best Cinematography. It went on to earn a lasting place as one of the best Korean films of all time, as well as the best-loved romantic movie.

* * *

"ROMANCE" is not an element immediately palpable in "Christmas in August." The role of Jung Won, the camera-shop operator, is portrayed by Han Suk-kyu, who, while already a major movie star when he made this film, was already past his youthful prime and looked too homely to be a credible romantic lead. And while Shim Eunha, who essayed the role of Da Rim the meter maid, was catapulted to stardom by this movie, in it, she was hardly a glamour puss, dressed much of the time in her staid uniform.

This is a romance movie, a reviewer notes, where none of the leads ever says "I love you." They also never hold hands, much less kiss. The budding romance is instead played out in sidelong glances, comfortable silences, shy smiles and, toward the end, long, longing looks that tug at the heart and bring on the tears—from the viewers.

The road to my watching "Christmas in August," the debut film of director Hur Jin-ho, began with his third movie "April Snow," which I watched on the big screen mainly because it starred Bae Yong-joon, the Koreanovela star known as "Yonsoma" to his millions of fans around Asia. Reviews of "April Snow" whetted my curiosity about Hur Jin-ho's other movies, which led to my buying a DVD of "Christmas in August."

* * *

WHILE I was sitting up late, watching "Christmas," my husband was startled awake when I suddenly began sobbing loudly. I'd been crying steadily but quietly for much of the movie, but the scene in which Jung Won, just out of the hospital and searching for Da Rim, catches sight of her from a coffee shop window and stills his impulse to call out to her, content to stare out longingly at her retreating figure, overcame whatever emotional control I could summon at the moment.

But don't be misled by this, for "Christmas in August" uses no cheap surefire techniques to manipulate its audience. (Besides, I can be moved to tears even by TV commercials.) The website "Subway Cinema" says of "Christmas": "Like a lazy summer evening, there's something inexplicably rewarding about such a small, quiet movie that sets out to speak about life, death and love, slowly, gently, and without pretension."

Some reviewers have complained about how "boring" the movie is, as it is replete with the small details of everyday life. "Subway Cinema" notes that this movie "talks about the big things in life by focusing on the small." But the tedious details build up to create not just a fascinating character study, but also a moving reflection on how we can all prepare for the end.

Jung Won's biggest problem, before he meets Da Rim, is who will look after his father when he's gone. Touching indeed is the scene where, woken up by thunder and lightning, he enters his father's room and places a reassuring arm about the older man. When his father cannot seem to follow his oral instructions on how to operate the VCD player, a frustrated Jung Won painstakingly writes down a step-by-step guide.

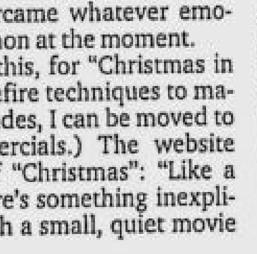
After his final hospitalization, Jung Won sets about preparing for his departure—leaving instructions for whoever ends up running the photo shop, getting his papers and photos in order, and even taking his own "death portrait."

* * *

BUT why is the film entitled "Christmas in August"? Much of the action takes place around summer, but the movie ends in winter, during the Christmas season. Da Rim, who never finds out about Jung Won's illness and death, passes by the photo shop, stops in front of the display window and walks away, smiling. She has seen her portrait in pride of place in the display window, and it tells her that Jung Won at least reciprocated her feelings.

This is not a "Christmas" film in the usual sense, since seasonal movies tend to focus on the fantasy, the spirituality or the sentimentality of the occasion. "Christmas in August" instead trains its sights on real life as it happens to real people, about coming to terms with death, and about learning to love and how to let oneself be loved. So it is not just a "romantic" film but also a Christmas movie, because isn't this season all about love, after all?

'La Leyenda Negra' revisited



SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

TEN YEARS AGO, DR. WILLIAM SUMMERS made his first trip to Manila to conduct research on Filipino music prior to the American era. Since little scholarly research had been published in any language on this topic, he was naturally intrigued. Visiting the different archives, he concluded that "very little music survived and that no individual or team of individuals in Manila had any interest in this 333-year period."

Dr. Fernando Zialcita of the Ateneo, in an e-mail on Dr. Summer's lecture on the subject at the university, said Dr. Summers had noted that the many achievements of Filipinos during the Spanish period were overlooked or denigrated and that there was "a nearly complete cultural erasure of music from this time."

Those of us who advocate preservation of architecture like Zialcita have a similar problem. Zialcita claims that churches are routinely depicted as "the product of slavery and forced labor" and ancestral homes of the 19th century are described as "Spanish" and not really Filipino, being "Spanish in style" and the home of the "oppressive elite."

Going back to Dr. Summers, during the next eight years that he was doing research in Manila and Bohol (where he discovered the great 18th-century Misa Baklayonan), he had the distinct impression of a condemnation of the Spanish period. "The obvious and powerful elements of Hispanic culture that remain highly visible were never acknowledged," he noted.

Had he observed the older parts of our cities and towns, he would have seen that not only were they not acknowledged but the colonial layout and the ancestral homes were being destroyed.

"How could it be possible that no one voiced the fact that the Philippines is a Hispanic country?" he asked.

Music not being my field, I can only accept his conclusions that there is a definite view that holds that "Filipino music culture is indigenous, solely in the oral tradition, rural and perhaps tribal." If there is Western influence, it isn't Filipino.

Believing there's a deliberate attempt to erase Spanish culture from our lives, Dr. Summers decided to analyze the historical sources of this prejudice, which is known as "La Leyenda Negra" (Black Legend): "the depiction of Spain and the Spaniards as bloodthirsty and cruel, greedy and fanatical, in excess of reality." (Nationmaster.com Encyclopaedia) Of course, there is the opposite "Leyenda Rosa" that views Spain through rose-colored glasses. Both expressions are the results of thinking in terms of things being purely black or white, "and not propitious for a neutral historical analysis except of folkloric perceptions."

Whatever the reasons for rejecting this part of our culture, we've come out the poorer for it. In effect, we've thrown the baby out with the bath water.

In December last year, Summers presented a synopsis of his findings in a talk he gave at the Ateneo, which I unfortunately couldn't attend. He traces the prejudice back to the Propaganda Movement's "vicious, anti-friar propaganda, ca. 1880, and the second, the northern, Teutonic version imposed by the US invasion forces and occupation government after 1898."

(If we compare it to recent events, we would be able to see how the Marcos regime has been depicted as the most horrible in all our history while the succeeding one, led by a saint, was the coming of the kingdom. Using that kind of simplistic propaganda makes one administration look much better than it actually is and its failings are overlooked.)

The Americans systematically encoded the black legend in governmental and educational agencies. In this manner, people in general were brainwashed into rejecting the idea that both were basically exploitative colonizers. Many feel that the US perpetrated the legend to justify their actions against Spain. Even up to the present, they say, evidence of the Black Legend exists in movies like Steven Spielberg's "Amistad." Even pirates of the Caribbean are presented as romantic figures (in the movie of the same title), when in reality they were incredibly cruel and no more than criminals. To this day, the legend lives on, "seriously distorting both the teaching of and research on the history of the Filipino people."

Summers believes that if this prejudice is unmasked "it will be possible to forge in the future a significantly revised historiographical model for use in teaching and research on the history of the Philippines and most especially the history of the Filipino people." (I can almost tell you now: Don't bet on it. Patterns of thinking have been so deeply inculcated that I cannot see how they can be altered in the near future.)

The Spaniards, by the way, were their own worst enemies. The Black Legend started in 1552, when Bartolomé de las Casas, formerly bishop of Chiapas, published "Brevissima Relación de la Destruyción de las Yndias" which has been described as "a powerful and lasting indictment of Spanish behavior toward Indian populations in the New World." (How the good friar could have described it as brief is weird; the work is 4,000 pages long.) Naturally, the Protestants picked up Las Casas' condemnation with alacrity and used it to argue for a greater non-Spanish European presence in the New World and, of course, for their own imperialistic designs.

A word of advice to the reader then for the new year: Never accept anybody's word at face value. Always look further into their motivations, especially if they happen to be politicians!

* * *

Comments at bambiharper@yahoo.com

Santa

YOUNG BLOOD

Wella Maria Hong

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

MY BROTHER FOUND OUT TODAY THAT SANTA ISN'T FOR real. And now, when he knows far-out wishes can't be fulfilled, a real Santa tops his Christmas wish list.

The day of discovery started innocently enough. We were having our usual Sunday family dinner with the TV on for our favorite family show, a weekly talk show. In that particular segment, the show featured kids and Christmas and a priest was one of the guests. In the course of the show, the well-meaning priest blurted out on national TV that "Santa is no other than mommy and daddy."

What a national catastrophe that was. Since the show is being endorsed by the Department of Education, I'm sure a lot of kids' bubbles burst when the good father spread the news to the entire nation.

My 10-year-old brother immediately picked up the message. After all, he was already quite disappointed with the bearded, jolly character who goes down the chimneys and rides a sleigh pulled by reindeer. Every year he had sent long lists to dear ol' Santa Claus, asking for hi-tech toy cars and toy jets. Instead, Santa always sent him chocolate bars and candies of all kinds. My brother reasoned that if Santa really existed and if he was so all-knowing as to be able to tell the good boys from the rotten ones, he should have known when a kid stopped being a kid and didn't want more chocolate bars and candies. In school, some of his classmates even said that Santa was really their aunties or uncles in disguise. Others said they really didn't get anything from Santa. At his tender age, my brother was greatly confused.

Thanks to the priest's public revelation, my brother officially became "grown-up." But instead of being more confused, my brother is mad at him. To his young mind, father just ruined Christmas for him and he was very vocal about it. To him, that priest on TV didn't know how to handle delicate matters. At the very least, my bother thinks he can no longer look forward to getting candy bars instead of cars with remote controls on Christmas. He would have been willing to half-suspect that Santa was just a big joke, for as long and he could get his annual supply of candies for being a good boy.

On the other hand, my brother's discovery came as a relief to my parents. It meant they don't have to play anymore the expensive role of Santa despite their meager income. They don't have to sustain a sugar-coated lie, which is still a lie anyway. They don't have to outwardly be amused while inwardly cringing over every Christmas list tucked into Christmas socks, which seem to grow longer over the years. A little smile was playing on Mom's lips when she hugged and congratulated my brother for being a kid no more.

An hour after the fateful TV show and our dinner, I found my brother back in the kitchen. He was still not over it and nursing his grudge. As he washed the dishes (it was his turn to do so), he was still muttering angrily about that priest on TV.

Trying to console him, I said there was a real Santa, adding that I was not referring to some dead saint. I feel obliged to explain the difference between what exists and what we believe to exist and everything in between. It's something I can easily relate to since I can get delusional about Santa, the *manananggal*, the tooth fairy and frequently God.

When I told my little brother that there really are many Santas all over the world, his eyes brimmed with hope. I told him these Santas are even better for they give away something more than the gift that he usually receives—something that doesn't die or get busted or consumed.

"You mean to say he gives away cell phones?" he eagerly inquired.

Taken aback, I said no a little too loud through gritted teeth. I told him that there are gifts that "really matter most." But as I was developing this spontaneous thesis, I had to give up midway through the effort, for I realized that love may still be a little too complicated for a 10-year-old to comprehend. Besides I had just lost in that department.

When he gave me a skeptical look, I asked myself if it's really a good idea to perpetuate the myth of Santa. But even as I write, I realize that maybe there is, just as there's always wisdom in innocent children. My mom said that Santa somehow makes my brother feel good. To him, it is especially comforting to know that somebody from outside the family loves him enough to check out whether he has been good and to give him gifts regularly. Santa motivates my brother to be good. A little of Santa would do no harm to anyone, she concluded.

My little brother is growing up. He used to be always mistaken for my son. Now, that mistake rarely happens because he has ballooned and has a bigger waistline than mine even if he is barely half my age. Still to me, he's always been a little kid. He gave me my first taste of what it is like to have a baby. He has made me realize how strong my motherly instincts are.

I am reaching the stage of my life when marriage [illegible]omes a perennial anxiety, and I have begun to consider how Santa would play a role in my future kids' lives. Reality seems much sweeter if sprinkled with a little fantasy. The disappointment of a 10-year-old will soon be forgotten, but not the joy of discovering candy-filled socks during one's tender years. And the remembrance of that joy is strong enough to make even me reconsider Santa once more. Maybe we all need a little of Santa in our lives, if only to remind us that someone's watching over us and that no matter how badly our lives have turned out, we're still worth the travel from the north pole and the slide down the dirty chimney.

Now on my brother's first Christmas without the blissful ignorance of believing in Santa, I'll make sure he will not miss him. I will make Santa for him.

As Christmas approaches, may we all find our own Santas. More importantly, may we be Santas to the people who need him most.

Wella Maria Hong, 22, is a graduating development communication student of Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

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Worse than Marcos

IN OPPOSING THE CONSTITUTIONAL amendments proposed by the Arroyo-appointed Constitutional Commission, the Senate is only living up to its role as the people's defender against the onslaughts of selfish partisan interests.

It is obvious that the shortcomings of the present Constitution are being exploited to introduce amendments seeking to strengthen the hold of incumbent politicians on power, including that of a president whose legitimacy 8 out of 10 Filipinos seriously doubt.

It is outrageous that the very same personalities who caused the "system" to rot (by making it serve their personal interests), thus bringing our country to its present crisis, are now the ones very "interested" to reform it. It looks like Lucifer and his minions telling their victims, whom they had lured to hell, that they are going to institute reforms so that hell would feel like heaven when, in fact, all they want is to create a "heaven" for no other but for themselves.

Look, virtually every amendment proposed by the ConCom serves partisan and vested interests: the term of office of all the incumbent officials will be extended; foreign corporations will be allowed to own and operate our public utilities and exploit our natural resources; aliens will be allowed to own Philippine lands; and media will be open to the ownership of non-Filipinos, thus giving foreigners the power to control and shape the thinking and attitudes of our people.

The ConCom-proposed Arroyo Constitution is in many ways worse than the Marcos Constitution. While the Marcos charter instituted a ruthless and corrupt conjugal dictatorship, at least, it did not hand the country over to foreigners. At the close of 1972, with martial law in its first year, a former president, Diosdado Macapagal, who was the president of the Constitutional Convention, presented to President Marcos the draft of a new Constitution that sold the liberties of the Filipino people to Marcos.

Twenty-three years later, Diosdado's daughter, Gloria, the 14th president of the Philippines, has moved to consolidate her own shaky hold on power by enticing incumbent elective officials with longer terms, as Marcos also did. But she goes further—she is selling the country to foreigners and thus enlarging the kitty for kickbacks and graft, while robbing the people of their birthright.

—MANUEL F. ALMARIO,
mfalmario@yahoo.com

Blind obedience will be overpowered by 'light'

IN THESE TIMES CALLING FOR the truth to be set free, high-ranking officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police have quite unusually chosen to remain loyal to the Arroyo administration. Their reason is the same as those of traditional politicians': rule of law. Some people in the media support their position.

For us ordinary people who want the truth out, we have seen how the "rule of law" has been used as an excuse by those who are in power and by those who expect to be rewarded for their "loyalty," like the AFP and PNP officers who are promised and compensated with influential postings. The same holds true with many pro-administration officials, national and local.

For all these officials, civilian and military, the rewards also come in other forms: travel abroad in the name of official business and appointment of spouses and relatives to "lucrative" positions in government, among others.

Because they enjoy these perks, they choose to perpetuate a culture of blind obedience.

Yes, blind obedience just to stay in power, at the expense of truth. I hope someday the truth will be out in the open. I pray to God that His light may shine upon those who refuse to see. The Day of Enlightenment will come and the eyes of these people will be opened, and they will come to appreciate the beauty of truth.

—EMMANUEL E. MURILLO,
Chipeco Subd., Tibag,
Calamba City

An 'Old Book' on leadership remembered

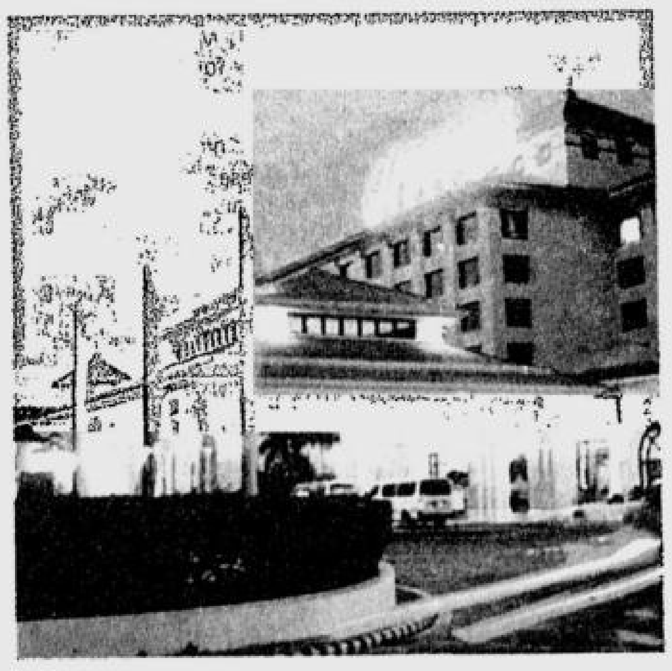
THE INQUIRER EDITORIAL ON "Leadership" (PDI, 12/13/05) was timely. Truly, our nation is in need of leaders with unquestionable character and integrity.

Allow me, however, to quote a very Old Book which shares with us simple but relevant characteristics of leadership. First, the Book says, leaders should know and fear God. Second, leaders should love the truth (ergo, they must hate lies). Third and lastly, leaders should hate bribes, covetousness or dishonest gain.

Well, there you have it. This Old Book should teach us a lesson or two on leadership. It worked for past generations, it can work for us, too. Verily, read Exodus 18:21 and share it with a leader.

—CONSTANTINO L. NAVARRO III,
Julia Vargas Avenue,
Ortigas Center, Pasig City

Season's Greetings



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'EZ2,' not 'jueteng,' found in Quezon

LUCENA CITY—SUCCESSIVE RAIDS ON SUSpected "jueteng" draw dens in several Quezon towns by the government anti-illegal gambling unit yielded no arrests but found widespread EZ2 lotto collections, police officials said yesterday.

According to Senior Supt. Victorio Caragan Jr., Quezon police chief, operatives from the Anti-Illegal Gambling Special Operation Task Force based in Camp Crame, conducted surprised raids in the towns of Tiaong, Gumaca and Calauag and Pagbilao on Thursday and Wednesday.

"All raids yielded nothing. What the raiding team found out was the rampant collections of EZ2 lotto. No jueteng draw dens were discovered even in remote areas and no jueteng bet collectors were arrested," Caragan said.

The game mechanics of EZ2 lotto, which is legal as it is run by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, is similar to jueteng in that players choose two-number combinations from 1 to 31.

A bettor for EZ2 chooses two number combinations and bets at a minimum of P10 which will entitle him to win P4,000. The draw is made once daily.

On Tuesday, government anti-jueteng czar and Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn, revealed that organized jueteng has resumed operation in Quezon.

The report was confirmed by Chief Supt. Antonio Nanas, head of the police's anti-illegal gambling unit, prompting him to dispatch a task force in the province to go after jueteng runners.

Supt. Faustino Euste, Gumaca police station chief, said the Camp Crame-based raiding team swooped down on Barangay Buencesiso Thursday afternoon but found no jueteng dens.

"I was surprised when the team led by a certain Maj. Manalo paid me a visit. I learned later that the group had just conducted a surprise anti-jueteng raid. I was informed that what they found were all EZ2 bet collectors," Euste said in a phone interview.

He added: "Contrary to newspaper reports, there's no more jueteng here. Jueteng bettors are now hooked on EZ2 lotto."

Also on Thursday, the same police team also raided a remote village in Pagbilao in search of jueteng draw dens. However, the raid also turned out to be negative.

Caragan said he is making the rounds of different municipalities and localities where jueteng had been widespread in the past to personally conduct monitoring and surprise inspections to find out if organized illegal gambling has really returned.

He said reports of jueteng returning in the province were false.

He admitted that there had been attempts by "fly-by-night" gamblers to conduct guerrilla jueteng operations in some remote areas several months ago.

"But all attempts had been quickly thwarted by my men," he said. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Lafayette backs fish scare probe in Sorsogon

MINING FIRM LAFAYETTE PHILIPpines Inc. (LPI), operator of the P1.4 billion Rapu-Rapu Polymetallic Project (RRPP) in Albay, yesterday said it supported plans by Sorsogon officials to investigate the source of a fish scare that grips the coastal towns of the Albay Gulf.

In a statement reacting to an INQUIRER story on Thursday, Rod Watt, LPI country manager, pledged the firm's full support for the investigation of the committee on environment of the Sorsogon provincial council.

"We will be cooperating fully... We will produce any relevant documents they require and they are even free to visit the site to see for themselves what we are doing in Rapu-Rapu," said Watt.

Denial

But he strongly denied allegations linking the RRPP to findings that mercury contamination was found in fish caught in the Albay Gulf.

"The BFAR report, assuming it is accurate, cannot be used to blame LPI as the source of the mercury," said Watt. "We do not use mercury in our gold processing plant."

He said LPI itself wanted to find out what the real source of the mercury was and was willing to extend whatever assistance is needed as part of LPI's "good corporate neighbor" policy.

"It is our commitment to work with the community that surrounds our project site and we are willing to do our share to help in anyway that we can...," he said.

Sobriety

The statement also quoted Sorsogon board member Rebecca Aquino as calling for sobriety on the fish scare issue.

"We should first determine if there are really high levels of mercury in the fish catch and, if true, what the real source of the contamination is," Aquino said in a press statement. "That will allow us to make the appropriate response," Aquino said.

Recent reports by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) stated that fish caught off the coastal waters of Prieto Diaz town registered mercury concentrations ranging from 0.699 to 1.288 parts per million (ppm) that are above the standard limit of 0.075 ppm.

DENNIS JAY SANTOS/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

GIFT
A native girl in Davao City caresses what could be her most precious gift this holiday season—a hand-me-down doll given by unidentified donors.

'Holiday spirit' brings back Vizcaya 'jueteng'

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZcaya—The spirit of Christmas has prompted gambling lords and their supposed protectors to resume "jueteng" operations in the province, a government source told the INQUIRER on Friday.

"*Alam mo na, Pasko kasi. Malungkot sila pag walang* jueteng (It's Christmas, you know. These people would be lonely without jueteng)," a provincial government official said, referring to profits and payoffs derived from the illegal numbers game.

According to the source, jueteng financiers started operations here on Dec. 17 allegedly with the backing of some local officials whom he declined to identify.

"They were so concerned that Christmas was nearing and the province remained jueteng-free. So when gambling lords sought permission to resume operations, officials did not pass up the chance," said the source.

He said the operators thought this was the right time to resume illegal gambling activities because the country was preoccupied with preparations for Christmas season.

The source said some local and police officials seemed envious that jueteng was thriving in other provinces in Cagayan Valley while Nueva Vizcaya was "always slow on the draw."

"*Lagi na lang daw* Vizcaya *ang huling nakakatunog* (They lament that Nueva Vizcaya seems to be the last to get the cue)," he said, quoting local officials.

The source said politicians were also worried over the deluge of requests for cash assistance from their constituents, which, he said, is customary during the holidays.

"They had to have a source [of funds], and fast. Jueteng is the fastest way for them to get cash," the source.

Residents confirmed that jueteng bet collectors had been collecting bets in various villages.

They noted, however, that the *cobradores* had been extra careful so that the activities would not be exposed.

"[Collectors] would only get bets from their loyal patrons. They would quickly deny when asked by others if they were collecting for jueteng. They seemed to have been well-instructed," a tricycle driver here said. *Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

11 political detainees in S. Mindanao freed

DAVAO CITY—AT LEAST 11 POlitical prisoners in Southern Mindanao have been released from detention, according to human rights group Karapatan.

Ariel Casilao, secretary general of Karapatan in the region, said because of this, their recent annual "Paskuhan kasama ang mga Bilanggong Pulitikal" at the Compostela Valley Province Provincial Rehabilitation Center in Tagum City has become more meaningful.

"Karapatan has found a more meaningful way to celebrate the Yuletide season with the release of the 11 political prisoners at Compostela Valley Province Provincial Rehabilitation Center," he said.

But Casilao noted there are still at least 10 political prisoners detained at the jail facility.

"Their case is long overdue considering that the Arroyo government continues to renege on its commitment in the peace process, specifically in decriminalizing political offenses," Casilao said.

He said due process was not observed in the cases of the prisoners.

"Most of these political prisoners were victims of arbitrary arrest and detention," he said.

Casilao said all over the country, political prisoners were charged with, tried and convicted of common crimes "which unjustly covered up the true political nature of their cases."

He said the act of criminalizing political dissent has not ceased with the continued arrest and detention of activists, community organizers, peasants, workers, women and even minors.

"Together with other prisoners, political detainees suffer the deplorable conditions of congested and poorly maintained jails," Casilao said. *Joselle Badilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Electricity in Mindanao

HAY SALAMAT!

COTABATO CITY—At least 21 areas in Mindanao would be energized next year, the Department of Energy said. The DOE said it recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Alliance for Mindanao Off-Grid Renewable Energy (Amore) Program of the United States Agency for International Development for the release of $390,000 to an electrification program covering these villages. The Amore program has been energizing Mindanao villages and hopes to put up electricity sources for more than 400 villages by the end of 2009.

Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Cop slain in Ilocos

CANDON CITY—An off-duty policeman was shot and killed by three men in Barangay Langlangca 2nd here on Wednesday. PO3 Eduardo Abad, 43, assigned to the municipal police in San Emilio, Ilocos Sur, and who drove a tricycle when he was off duty, was hired by the suspects to go to the city proper. When they reached Barangay Langlangca 2nd, one of the suspects seated behind Abad shot him in the nape. They also took the victim's 9 mm service pistol. Candon police chief Supt. Pedro Ganir said the suspects could be members of the *agaw armas* group of the New People's Army.

Leoncio Balbin Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Bulacan trader killed

CAMP GEN. ALEJO SANTOS, BULACAN—A businessman was killed on Sunday when two men beat him up after his car hit the suspects' car on Cagayan Valley Road in Guiguinto town. Police said the victim, Joel Bulaong, 38, died before reaching the Marcelo Padilla Hospital in Plaridel town. Reports said Bulaong was driving his Nissan Patrol in Barangay Sta. Rita in Guiguinto when he hit a Mazda sedan driven by Rafael Ramirez, 36, at about 5:30 p.m. An argument ensued between Bulaong and Ramirez and his brother Rene. Police said the Ramirezes beat up Bulaong and hit him with a rock in the head. Police arrested Rafael Ramirez while his brother escaped.

Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

10-day ceasefire in Negros

BACOLOD CITY—The Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) on Thursday declared a 10-day unilateral ceasefire with its rival rebel group, the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA), starting on Dec. 24. Ka Victorino Sumulong, RPA-ABB spokesperson in Negros Occidental, said the ceasefire was declared in time for the holidays. Sumulong said in a statement that the RPA-ABB will avoid confrontations with the CPP-NPA during the ceasefire period despite actions the rival rebel group may take. "Because our ceasefire is not a bilateral agreement, any armed conflict that may take place or trouble within the 10-day period will not be initiated by our forces," he said. The RPA-ABB has been observing a ceasefire with the government following the signing of a peace agreement in 2000.

Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

Mindoro mining appeal

CITY OF CALAPAN—The looming operation of Crew Mining in Oriental Mindoro prompted residents to appeal to President Macapagal-Arroyo to put a stop to more mining activities in the province. During a National League of Mayors meeting, Oriental Mindoro Mayor's League president Norberto Mendoza conveyed to the President the opposition to the project by the people. The residents vowed to stage protest rallies against any new mining operations. Ms Arroyo said she will instruct Environment Secretary Michael Defensor to review and reconsider the mining case in the province.

Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LGUs to get withheld shares in IRA soon

By Romy G. Amarado
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—THE NAtional government will start releasing in January next year to Local Government Units (LGUs) their shares of the portion of the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) withheld by the national government for four years.

Negros Oriental Gov. George P. Arnaiz said President Macapagal-Arroyo and Finance Secretary Margarito "Gary" Teves gave assurances that LGUs could withdraw their withheld shares in January either from Land Bank of the Philippines or Development Bank of the Philippines.

Arnaiz said LGUs could withdraw at once the full amount they are entitled to, minus 28 percent interest.

Local governments would share some P17.5 billion in accumulated funds that was withheld by the national government from the IRA of LGUs from 1999 to 2002.

Unconstitutional

The withholding of a portion of the IRA was, however, declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2004 in its decision in the case filed by former Batangas Gov. Hermilando Mandanas against former Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, former Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin and former Interior Secretary Jose Lina Jr.

The withheld amount was set aside for the Local Government Service Equalization Fund (LGSEF), a brainchild of the administration of former President Joseph Estrada.

Originally, coined as "Program for Devolution and Adjustment and Equalization," LGSEF was designed "to facilitate the process of enhancing the capacities of local government units in the discharge of the functions and services devolved to them by the national government."

Projects

Under the General Appropriations Act of 1999, 2000 and 2001, P5 billion from the IRA was set aside each year "for the funding requirements of projects and activities arising from the full and efficient implementation of devolved functions and services of local government units."

The Arroyo administration continued implementing the LGSEF in the reenacted budget of 2002.

But the Supreme Court ruled in the Mandanas case that withholding any portion of the IRA was unconstitutional.

The high tribunal also ruled that such withholding violates Republic Act No. 7160 (Local Government Code of 1991), which underscores in Section 286 that "the share of each local government unit shall be released... directly to the provincial, city, municipal or barangay treasurer..."

INQUIRER Visayas

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Editor **Jun Bandayrel**
Bureau Chief **Edralyn L. Benedicto**

US artist offers everyday Christmas

PHOTOS BY HAZEL P. VILLA

FAÇADE of Samuel Butcher's mansion in Sampaguita Gardens

By Hazel P. Villa
New Washington, Aklan

IT WAS MEANT TO BE THE RETIREMENT haven of one of America's well-loved artists.

Samuel Butcher, the creator of one of the world's best-loved figurines—the heart-tugging Precious Moments dolls with their teardrop eyes and "Jesus Loves Me" tags, came to Aklan in 2001 as part of his Asian sojourns. He already had a Precious Moments factory in Pasig.

"Jean Velarde, the vice mayor of New Washington, gave me and my friends a royal tour of the place and she brought us to this property which had only *nipa* huts and coconut trees. I said it would make a nice place for my retirement," said Butcher, who turns 67 on Jan. 1.

The retirement place, a 2.5-hectare property, did not turn out to be a simple *nipa*-hut-and-garden affair.

The artist in Butcher could not help but develop the place with both miniscule and imposing centuries-old Orientalia from his travels, and his own figurines and paintings of Precious Moments figures.

In four years, Butcher has transformed his place into what he now calls Sampaguita Garden Resort, where visitors are transported to Christmas wonderland whatever time of the year.

Not only has Butcher made the Philippines his home; he, too, has adopted the Philippine spirit of celebrating Christmas as early as possible. At Sampaguita Gardens, the Yuletide season began on Oct. 28 with all kinds of attractions related to the holiday season to last until January next year.

On other months, the resort retains its Christmassy mood and ambiance but without the frenetic preparations of "Everyday is Christmas" from October to December, such as a 10-float motorcade passing through three towns, fashion show and fair with free rides for the young, and the much-awaited switching on of the lights and fireworks display.

The launch of the three-month "Everyday is Christmas" is nothing new in the resort. Its buildings are festooned with Christmas themes and Jojo's Christmas Cottage is the only year-round Christmas store in the Philippines that hosts selections of Precious Moments collectibles and other holiday ornaments.

Attractions, conversation pieces

Sampaguita Gardens was officially organized in December 2001 and started commercial operations in June 2003, with Butcher's Orientalia housed in his mansion as some of the first attractions.

BUTCHER

Butcher said he named the resort "Sampaguita" because he liked the flower so much and the first three letters stood for his nickname.

In 2004, the three-floor, Victorian-style Jojo's Christmas Cottage was opened to the public. It is named after Jojo Sonillo, Butcher's aide and the resort's president and main marketing man.

Years after, other attractions followed—flowing from the creative mind of Butcher whose house alone draws the most number of oohs and aahs from visitors who can roam the sprawling home as long as they came barefoot.

The Samuel J. Butcher Mansion is the main attraction of the resort with its Thai-inspired designs, 300-year-old opium bed and cabinets inlaid with designs made of pearls, and numerous Oriental arts, crafts, furniture and antiques that Butcher has collected from his Asian travels.

Oriental Garden

Before you enter the mansion, you have to pass through his Oriental Garden "guarded" by two bronze life-sized horses from Thailand. The garden can accommodate 500 people. Its nooks and crannies, however, are filled with conversation pieces and installations that only a man like Butcher could think of.

The resort has a 43-square-foot aquarium with a background designed by Butcher and a butterfly farm and sanctuary for a variety of species, especially those that are indigenous to Aklan.

The Christmas spirit, however, is kept alive by kiddy attractions, such as Sammy's Showboat, a colorful gathering place designed as a boat in the middle of a lagoon. It can accommodate about 80 persons for children's parties.

Sammy's Circus Rides features a ferris wheel, 18-horse carousel, and a replica of a steam-powered train that tours kids around the park.

The Precious Moments Gallery houses Butcher's memorabilia and collection of Precious Moments dolls and figurines.

Like other typical resorts, Sampaguita Gardens has a fitness center, spa, business center, convention and seminar centers, restaurants, and an adult and kiddy pool—all with touches of Christmas in them.

The chapel

The last construction would be the scaled-down version of the grand Precious Moments Chapel in Carthage, Missouri, whose Sistine-like ceiling mural of 2,600 square feet was painted in rich Renaissance colors by Butcher and his assistants.

The Precious Moments Chapel is visited by almost a million visitors yearly, greatly helping the economy of Missouri, said Sonillo, who often accompanies Butcher in his travels.

Rolf Baniqued, the resort's administrative officer, said the chapel would be opened to the public in the first quarter of 2006.

Butcher recounted that since they were poor and could not afford to give to others in need, he would make his teardrop-eyed drawings, write Christian sayings in it, and give it to the person in need who, in turn, would show them to other people.

In his Christmas message distributed to visitors at the resort, Butcher summed up the philosophy behind his "Everyday is Christmas" theme for Sampaguita Gardens:

"May I suggest that this year, enter into the spirit of Christmas by giving to someone who truly has a need. You may not know them well, and your gift may not be that expensive but you can be certain of this: "Little is much when the Lord is in it" and He will reward you if you give with a loving heart. I know because He has blessed me in that way time and time again. May the joy of Christmas fill your hearts as you share God's love with others."

Who is Jesus?
Why was He born to us as man?
Why was He sent to us at that time?
Why not now, when news coverage could be more comprehensive?
What does He want from us?
What would He have to say about the goings-on in the world?
Does He have a plan for our country?
Does He have a plan for each one of us?
Is He coming back like He said He would?
If so, when?
Was He really born on December 25th?
Was the manger story all true?
If this salvation bit is real, what do we have to do to get it?

Christmas is the one story that requires the reader to be the INQUIRER

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Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

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Warning on 'hot lechon' out

By Jocelyn R. Uy

BEFORE MAKING IT TO HOLIDAY BUFFET tables, the Muntinlupa City Veterinary Office (CVO) confiscated more than 50 pig carcasses in Barangay Tunasan on Thursday.

The CVO first confiscated 27 dead pigs from a *lechon* (roast pig) store in the area after receiving a tip about the dubious cargo from a concerned citizen.

City veterinarian Dr. Pamela Hernandez said handlers Edgardo Busilic, Delfin Lalonero, Chrisman Bico and Jose Mendoza, were not able to present the required documents, like the Livestock Handlers License, to authorities when questioned about the cargo.

Shipping permits showed the hogs came from Camarines Sur and were supposed to be delivered to Pangasinan.

Another delivery truck from Marinduque allegedly owned by one Evangeline Inzulito, yielded two dead pigs.

Following the two incidents, the CVO conducted an inspection of pig pens in the barangay. It found 23 more dead pigs that were about to be roasted.

Authorities identified the owner of the place as Candido Duran.

The confiscated carcasses were immediately burned as they were unfit for human consumption, said Hernandez.

Appeal aired

Mayor Jaime Fresnedi appealed to *lechon* traders in Barangay Tunasan to stop selling hot meat as it could lead to an outbreak of food poisoning.

Peddling hot or "double dead" meat sold without proper certifications could eventually kill the thriving *lechon* industry in the barangay, the mayor warned the traders.

Meanwhile, representatives of the National Meat Inspection Commission (NMIC) and the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group seized more than a hundred kilos of hot meat in Pasay City before dawn yesterday.

However, Pasay City public market administrator Edelito Remanente stressed the shipment did not come from the city market.

"It just so happened that when the raiding team came, the vendors fled and parked their truck near our market," he said.

Dr. Ronaldo Bernasor, city veterinarian, also said hot meat coming from other cities were brought to a night market known as the "White House" on Protacio Street at the corner Taft Avenue.

"We have been keeping a tight watch on this area," Benasor said.

"The vendors ply their illegal business when they know the coast is clear," he added.

He assured consumers that meat vendors in the public market always secure permits from the NMIC.

"We also conduct regular inspections of the meat delivered to the markets of Pasay City," he added.

Lanot family's Yule wish: Justice for slain patriarch

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE FAMILY AND SUPPORTERS of assassinated former Pasig City Rep. Henry Lanot are still awaiting justice as they celebrate their first Christmas without him.

"This will be a sad Christmas for us," his eldest son Ken told the INQUIRER yesterday.

He said the entire family had *Noche Buena*, the traditional midnight repast on Christmas Eve, in their house at Greenland Subdivision when his father was alive.

Lanot's supporters also gathered in the family home before Christmas.

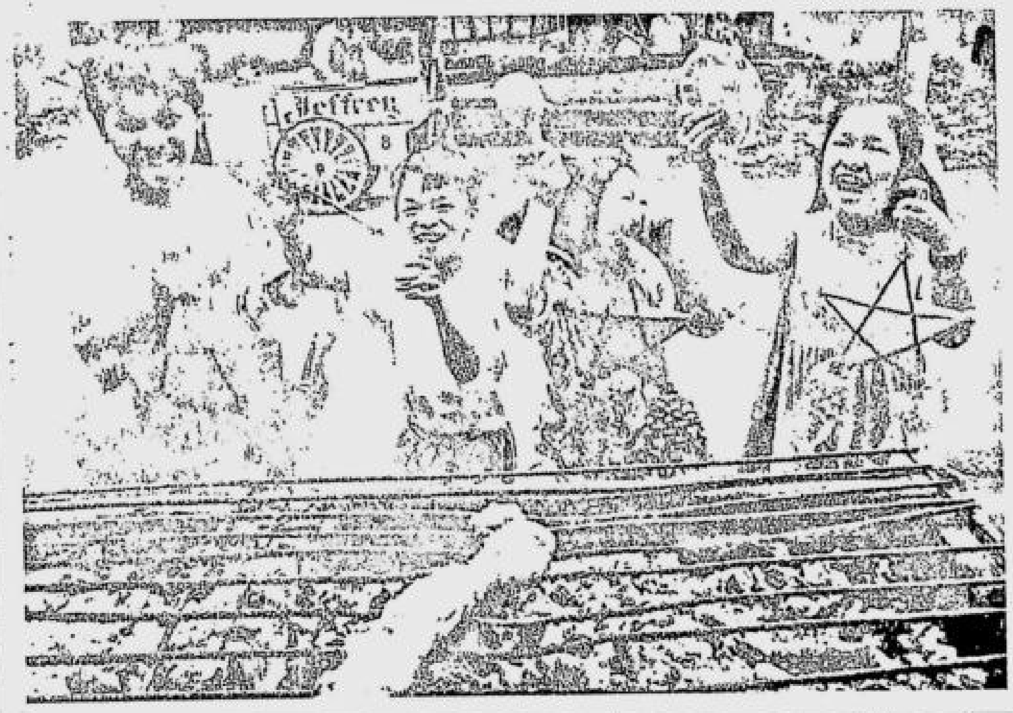
"We will still spend Christmas in the house. But we will surely miss his presence," Ken added.

The family offered a mass for Lanot Wednesday night and prayed for swift justice to give closure to the case.

Lanot was shot in the head while eating lunch in a restaurant in Pasig City in April. His killer (or killers) remain free.

Ken said witnesses promised to help, "But they were asking for money. That made it even more painful for us."

"This is a difficult battle," he added." We still believe influential people are behind my father's assassination."



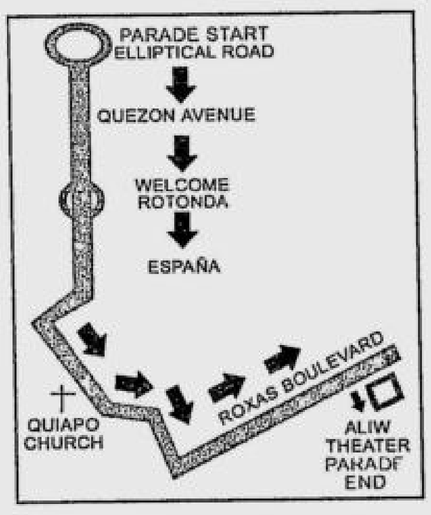
THAT'S THE SPIRIT! Carrying homemade lanterns and inexpensive musical aids, these children bring the joys of the Christmas season to this neighborhood in Quezon City. JOAN BONDOC

Traffic rerouted today for filmfest

By Marinel R. Cruz

MOTORISTS SHOULD EXPECT heavy traffic along major thoroughfares from 1:30 to 7 p.m. today because of the "Parade of the Stars," a yearly extravaganza marking the official start of the 31st Metro Manila Film Festival.

The Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said the parade will start at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City and pass through Quezon Avenue and España. It would turn right on Lerma Street and pass through Quezon Boulevard, P. Burgos and Roxas Boulevard.



The parade route leads to the Cultural Center of the Philippines complex, also on Roxas Boulevard, and ends on Sotto Street in front of the Aliw Theater at the Star City area in Pasay City.

Satellite stages would be set up at the Mabuhay Rotunda in Quezon City, and Plaza Miranda and Luneta in Manila. Show business personalities are expected to perform simultaneously in all three locations as the parade weaves its way in and out of the Metro's main roads. The 12-day festival, which opens on Christmas day, will feature 10 films: "Ako Legal Wife," "Enteng Kabisote 2," "Exodus," "Kutob," "Mulawin," and "Shake, Rattle & Roll," "Terrorist Hunter," "Blue Moon," "Mourning Girls," and "Lagot Ka Sa Kuya Ko."

Ten floats representing the entries will compete for the Most Outstanding Float award. The grand prize winner will get P500,000, while the second placer will receive P300,000. A P100,000 prize has been set aside for the third prize. The "Gabi ng Parangal" will be held Jan. 6 at the Aliw Theater.

The Manila Broadcasting Company, which co-produces the festival with the MMDA, said the People's Choice Award had been added this year. The winner in this category will be chosen by audience voting via the SMS (short message service).

METROBRIEFS

Makati revelers, watch out

HIC
HIC
DI AKO LASING. NASISINOK LANG!

MAKE sure you can still walk straight and can steer that wheel properly after a holiday party in Makati City. The Makati City government said this week that its traffic and public safety officers would be on a round the clock watch for holiday revelers who might end up too tipsy to drive their car after hours of merry-making. Violators face a minimum fine of P2,500 or a prison term upon the discretion of a trial court. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

Hospital on fire

A FIRE broke out in the laboratory of the St. Martin de Porres charity hospital at the corner of Blumentritt and Bonifacio Streets in Barangay Kabayanan, San Juan town yesterday afternoon. Firefighters managed to evacuate all the patients at the hospital unharmed. San Juan Fire Station investigation chief Chandler Arcadio said the fire could have been triggered by an alcohol spill inside the laboratory where hospital employees were processing samples from patients. Patients in the church-run hospital were transferred to different hospitals in San Juan after the building was temporarily closed. *Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

Toll-free at SLEX, Skyway

THE PHILIPPINE National Construction Corp. (PNCC), South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) and the PNCC Skyway Corp., operator of the Skyway System announced a toll holiday starting 10 p.m. today, up to 6 a.m. tomorrow, and from 10 p.m. on Dec. 31 up to 6 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2006, as a thank you gesture to patrons for the holidays.

Every day is Christmas

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

CHRISTMAS IS THE TIME when most people become generous. They part with their money and other things to keep in tune with the season of giving. On other days, they are not so generous.

But persons who are successful or rich have learned early on that generosity is rewarding. Those who give of themselves unselfishly in their job or business become successful.

In short, people who make every day Christmas Day become rich or successful in their chosen careers.

The universe, according to Deepak Chopra, operates on a process of give and take. Whatever you give unselfishly comes back to you tenfold, even a hundredfold. The more you give, the more you receive.

Chopra, author of "The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success," says: "Practicing the Law of Giving is actually very simple: if you want joy, give joy to others; if you want love, learn to give love; if you want attention and appreciation, learn to give attention and appreciation; if you want material affluence, help others to become materially affluent. In fact, the easiest way to get what you want is to help others get what they want… If you want to be blessed with all the good things in life, learn to silently bless everyone with all the good things in life."

The Chinese-Filipinos or *Chinoys* are examples of how the universe rewards people who are generous in business. The *Chinoys* don't mind being "milking cows" of corrupt public officials.

Successful Filipinos are generous, even to a fault, toward their needy brethren. An example is former Mayor Lilia "Baby" Pineda of Lubao, Pampanga.

Pineda, wife of alleged "jueteng" lord Bong Pineda, gives to the poor even if they're not from her hometown of Lubao. She cares for the mentally sick, gives to the poor Aetas of Zambales, and readily offers a helping hand to calamity victims. The Pinedas are rich probably because of Baby's generosity.

People who practice tithing become well-off after starting the practice. Tithing is giving a percentage of one's income to a church or to charity. The universe, which is a mirror, reflects back their prosperity consciousness by giving them more money.

Canadian Provincial Nominee & Immigration Services
Form No: 001

APPLICATION FOR IMMIGRATION / PERMANENT RESIDENCY

I-Please specify category for which you are applying

☐ Family Class/Sponsorship
☐ Student
☐ Skilled Worker

Business Class
☐ Investor
☐ Entrepreneur
☐ Self-employed

II- PERSONAL INFORMATION
1. Full name (as shown in the passport/travel document)
Title (Mr/Ms/Mrs) (Family Name) (Given Name) (Middle Name)
2. Date of Birth ____________(day/mo/yy) / Place of Birth ____________Country of Citizenship ____________

III– EDUCATION
a. Highest Level of completed education:
☐ Secondary /High School
☐ Vocational/Trade/Apprenticeship
☐ College
☐ Bachelor's degree
☐ Master's degree/PhD
☐ Others (specify)____________
b. Current Occupation____________How long?_______(years)__________(months)

IV-Language proficiency / Principal Applicant :

Language	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair
English				
French				
Others (Specify)				

Spouse:

Language	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair
English				
French				
Others (Specify)				

V-Marital Status
☐ Married
☐ Single
☐ Divorced/Separated
☐ Widow/widower
☐ Common-Law

VI- Spouse Detail (if married)
a. Full name (as shown in the passport/travel document)
(Family Name) (Given Name) (Middle Name)
b. Date of Birth ____________day/mo/yy) / Place of Birth ____________Country of Citizenship____________
c. Children's Detail (if any) Please use extra sheet if necessary

Name	Date of Birth / Place of Birth

VII-DO YOU HAVE ANY RELATIVES IN CANADA?
☐ Yes
☐ No

VIII–WHERE DO YOU INTEND TO LIVE IN CANADA
City / Town____________Province____________

IX-CONTACT DETAILS
Address:____________
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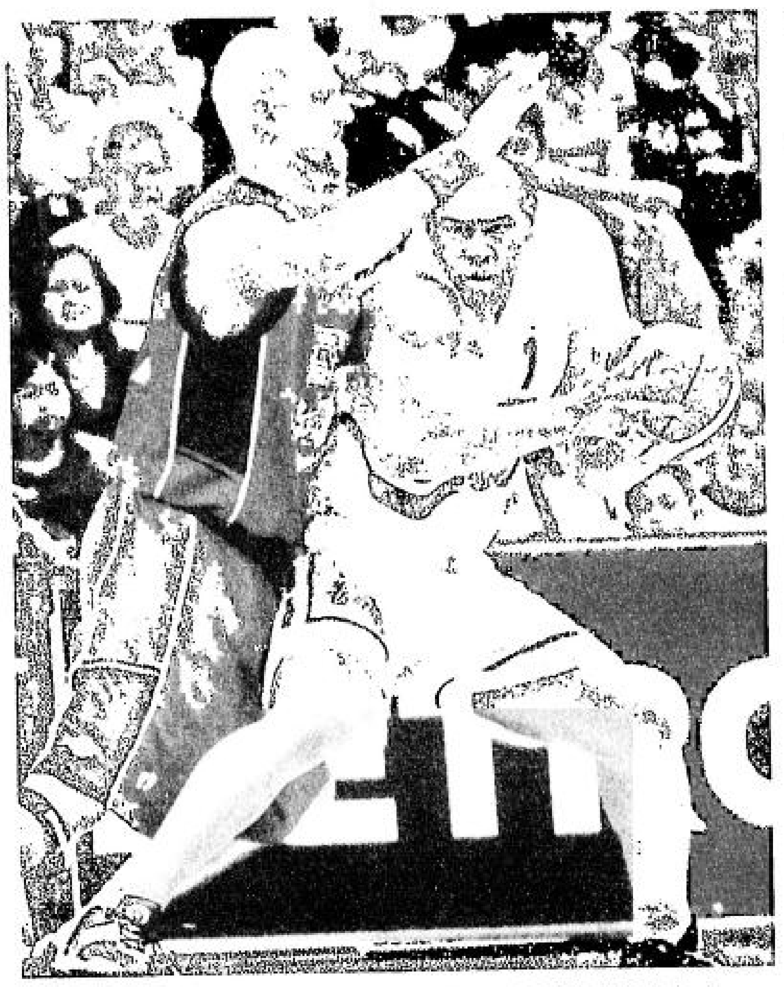
Barako edge Tigers as Greer passes test



ALASKA'S Ali Peek sets up against Mick Pennisi of Red Bull during their game last night. ERIK ARAZAS

GAME TOMORROW (*Cuneta Astrodome*)
5 p.m.—Alaska vs Barangay Ginebra

By June Navarro

QUEMONT GREER WENT through a make-or-break final examination yesterday. Luckily, he passed the test with flying colors.

Greer sank the marginal free throw that lifted Red Bull Barako to a thrilling 78-77 squeaker over Coca-Cola in the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference last night at the Cuneta Astrodome.

With management contemplating to replace him, Greer made up for a forgettable game against Air21 by tossing in 24 points on top of 11 rebounds and a steal to propel the Barako to a playoff for an automatic semifinal berth.

Greer, who used to average 27.7 points per outing, went four-of-21 from the field opposite the Express and bungled all except one of his 10 free throws to finish with nine points, a conference low among imports.

"We're very much concerned about him (Greer)," said Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao, whose Barako earned the chance to join Purefoods Chunkee in the semifinals after ending the classification phase with a 9-7 record.

Also in strong contention for semifinal slots are Talk 'N Text (8-7), Air21 (9-7) and Barangay Ginebra (8-7). The chances of those teams hinge on the results of the San MIguel-Talk 'N Text game being played at presstime and on Sunday's match between Ginebra and Alaska (7-8).

"This game was crucial for him and I guess he passed the test," said Guiao. " We don't want to rock the boat going into the playoffs."

Still, the Barako coaching staff will assess Greer's value to the team for a couple of days after the holiday season.

"From what I saw tonight, he'll do just fine," said Guiao.

In the second game, Talk 'N Text walloped San Miguel Beer, 94-73, to finish the classification phase with nine victories and seven losses. The Phone Pals are now hoping for Alaska to beat Barangay Ginebra tomorrow to gain a playoff spot against Red Bull for an automatic semifinal seat.

The Beermen, who took the eighth seed with a 6-10 card, set up a survivor duel with the Coca-Cola Tigers armed with a twice-to-beat edge.

The scores:

First Game

RED BULL 78—Greer 24, Torion 13, Villanueva 9, Valenzuela 8, Tugade 7, Pennisi 7, Baguio 5, Robinson 3, Najorda 2, Bugia 0, Ybañez 0.

COCA-COLA 77—Arigo 24, Peek 19, Singson 9, Reavis 7, Miranda 6, Mamaril 6, Antonio 6, Espinosa 0, Wainwright 0, Francisco 0.

Quarters: 20-14, 35-26, 59-50, 78-77

Boom Boom fights tall, rugged Mexican today

WHETHER OR NOT HE'S MADE OF CHAMpionship stuff could finally be unraveled today when unbeaten knockout star Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista of the Philippines takes on rugged Gerardo Espinoza of Mexico at the Sycuan Resort and Casino in El Cajon, California.

Banking on tremendous punching power, Bautista (18-0, 14 KOs) had turned most of his fights into knockout picnics.

UNFAZED: Rey Bautista (CDN/LITO TECSON)

But the 25-year-old Espinoza (28-9, 26 KOs), who came from the same neighborhood as Erik Morales in Tijuana, Mexico, enjoys a vast edge in experience.

The tall and lanky Espinoza, nicknamed "Locomotora," was a one-time WBO world bantamweight challenger, and had also reigned as the WBO North American Boxing Organization superbantam and bantam titlist.

While there was reason to believe some of Bautista's victims were patsies, Espinoza has been with some big names like undefeated Jose Miguel Aguiniga, ex-world champions Mauricio Martinez and Cruz Carbajal, and current IBF champion Rafael Marquez.

Bautista, however, claimed he is unfazed.

He told the boxing website Fightnews: "I'm not worried about the experience edge he has on me because I'm well prepared for this fight. I feel I'm ready for this step-up in competition."

At yesterday's official weigh-in, Bautista came in at 118 3/4 lb, while Espinoza checked in at 120 lb.

Cebu sportsman Tony Aldeguer, Bautista's manager, said renowned trainer Freddie Roach will work his ward's corner today, assisted by Filipino trainer Edito "Ala" Villamor and conditioning coach Justin Fortune.

Before flying to the United States, Bautista had worked hard at the ALA Gym in Cebu.

Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor

Which NSA will the Palace bless?

By Marc Anthony Reyes

WHICH NATIONAL SPORTS ASSOCIATION gets slots in the "Elite 10" and which will settle for crumbs in the country's renewed pursuit for the first Olympic gold?

Two days before Christmas, NSAs were asking yesterday which among them will gain the right to be included in the list of 10 sports disciplines which President Macapagal-Arroyo said will be funded heavily by the government and assigned blue-chip corporate sponsors.

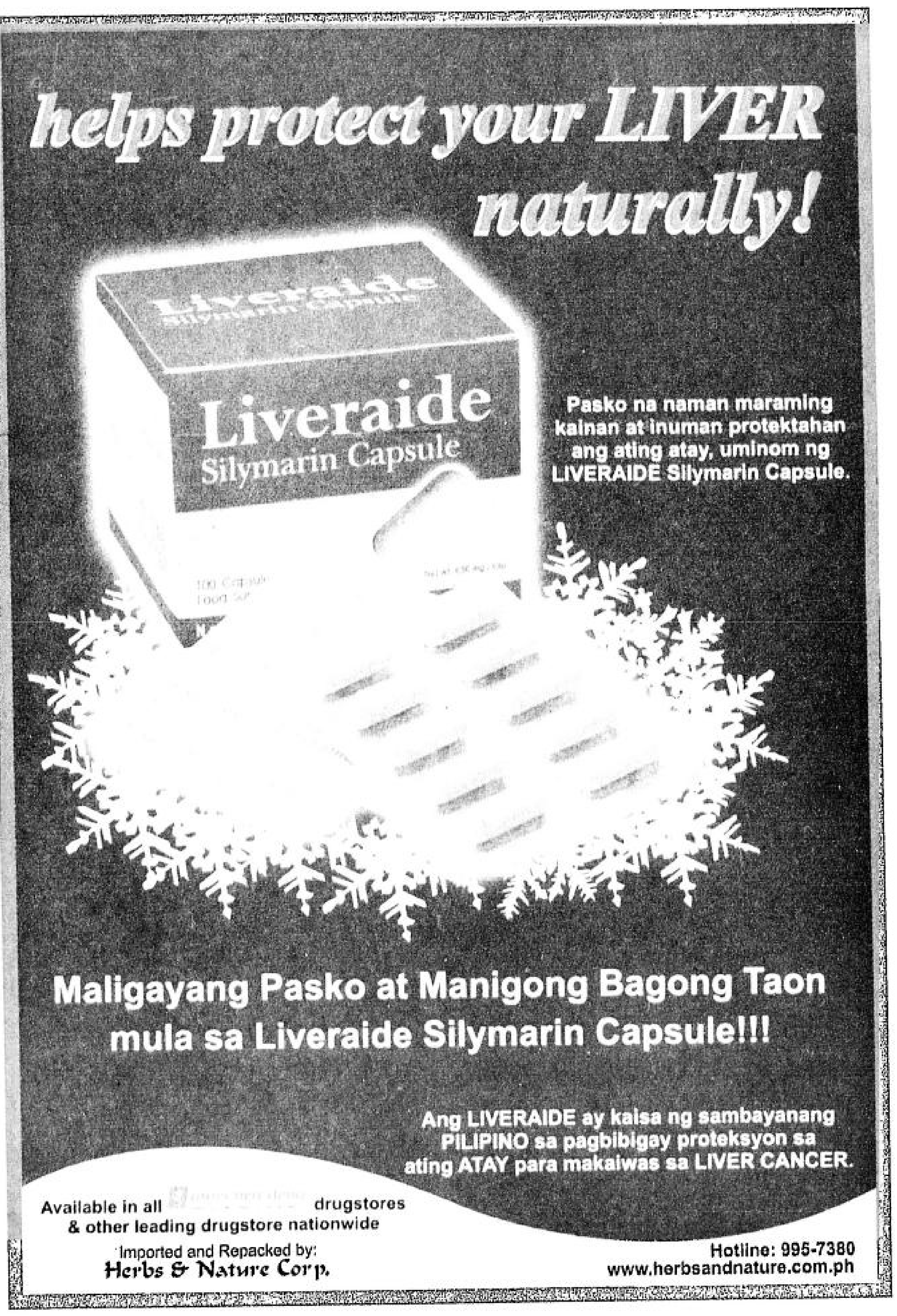
Philippine Olympic Committee spokesman Joey Romasanta said there is a plan to hold a planning session where the "blueprint for RP sports" will be drawn and from which the 10 sports—from among 40 NSAs—will be chosen.

"If we are going to look for our first Olympic gold, then we should consider giving priority to Olympic sports," Romasanta told the INQUIRER. "But it will have to be decided by the POC as one body."

He also underscored the possibility of sparking heated debates among the NSAs over the coveted slots that will definitely take the lion's share of government and private sector's support.

The President singled out boxing as one of those to be given ample budget to train and compete here and abroad, along with shoo-ins diving, taekwondo and archery.

Wushu, track and field, billiards, bowling and fencing could also make the list because of their impressive performance during the 23rd Southeast Asian Games which the country overwhelmingly won for the first time.



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AFP 'A' tops Pichay team chess, takes home ₱200,000

ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES "A" BESTED Southern Chess Association (Cabuyao), 2.5-1.5, Thursday night to rule the Prospero "Butch" Pichay Chess Challenge and take the P200,000 top purse at the Celebrity Sports Plaza in Quezon City.

Former Asian Zonal champion IM Ronald Dableo downed former RP junior champion NM Paul Gomez on Board 1 while Fide Master Rico Salimbagat trounced Rolando Andador on Board 2 to power AFP A to victory in the P500,000 tournament.

David Alorta settled for a draw with Dr. Alfredo Paez on Board 3 to provide the clincher, negating the loss of Allan Cantonjos to Dino Ballecer on Board 4.

SCA (Cabuyao) took the P100,000 runner-up prize.

In the battle for third, Tagaytay City A, the reigning National Inter-Cities Chess champion, defeated sister team and elimination round topnotcher Tagaytay B, 3-1.

GM Rogelio "Joey" Antonio and Ilann Perez won their matches over 12-year-old Fide Master Wesley So and Allan Macala on boards 1 and 4, respectively, to tilt the balance in favor of Tagaytay A.

Other matches saw IM Chito Garma and Jerry Areque split the point with Edmundo Gatus and Truman Hernaez on boards 2 and 3, respectively.

In the semifinal round, AFP A edged Tagaytay B, 2.5-1.5, while SCA and Tagaytay A settled for a 2-2 draw.

IM Jayson Gonzales of Surigao, emerged as the gold medalist on Board 1. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

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Is Luli Arroyo also Taray Queen?

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

NO MATTER WHAT THEY SAY, I think it was a good idea and gesture on the part of First Gentleman Mike Arroyo to reward the gold medalists of the Southeast Asian Games with a bonus trip to Hong Kong.

For most of the athletes, it was a most memorable experience.

"*Masaya*. It was a lot of fun. Most important of all, it gave us the rare opportunity to be together. *Nagkaroon kami ng* bonding," I'd hear these words said over and over again.

Members of the Hong Kong delegation had a chance to personally interact during the dinner hosted by the First Gentleman at the famous Superstar Restaurant in Tsim Sha Tsui which specializes in Peking duck. Here the athletes presented their benefactor with song and dance numbers that visibly delighted him.

The atmosphere was festive, to say the least, and the meal sumptuous: roasted suckling pig, roast duck, prawns, fried pigeon, fresh cooked vegetables, etc. The service staff had their hands full serving more than 300 people with about 10 lauriat dishes.

* * *

The following day was Disneyland day. Except for scribe Eddie Alinea whose leg was hurting, I suppose everyone went there to check out and enjoy the place.

Actually, it didn't quite measure up to expectations, particularly if you've been to the original Disneyland in Anaheim, California.

The Hong Kong version is very small. The Disneyland atmosphere was there, but it was only like a carnival with rides. What I found most impressive was the giant Christmas tree which seemed to be studded with millions of tiny multicolored lights. Toward the closing of the gates, the tree was lit and a shower of what seemed like snow wafted in the air.

Otherwise, the place was a rip-off. From the entrance ticket (US$40) to the souvenirs, none of which was lower than HK$35 (P245).

* * *

The First Gentleman, I was told, had gone to Disneyland just before noon, that's why I was surprised to find him still there at dusk, approaching the table next to ours where we were having coffee.

A source close to him said FG had so much fun he decided to see the whole place. He took the Space Mountain ride twice, even if he had to queue up for several minutes on both occasions.

I did hear about his being so down to earth, he'd take the economy seat during the flight to be with the athletes. He was also booked with them at the Holiday Inn.

I heard so many good things about the First Gentleman that I thought I'd get a few words from him.

"Can I interview you, sir, after you've eaten?" I asked.

Before he could say anything, the small girl seated to his left answered.

"No!"

"No?" I asked, thinking she was joking.

"No! We're on vacation. I hope you can respect that!" she said with a straight face.

Taray! I realized then that I was dealing with Luli Arroyo.

I was taken aback and, I guess, so was FG who made some facial signs which I took to mean everything was okay with him, that he could be interviewed, maybe later.

Oh well, that's the way the cookie crumbles. As the scribe next to me whispered, "*Mababait yung sons ni FG, si Mikey at si Dato. Pero kahit na nga sa kahit anong* production assembly line, we have to give allowance to one or two pieces *na may* factory defect."

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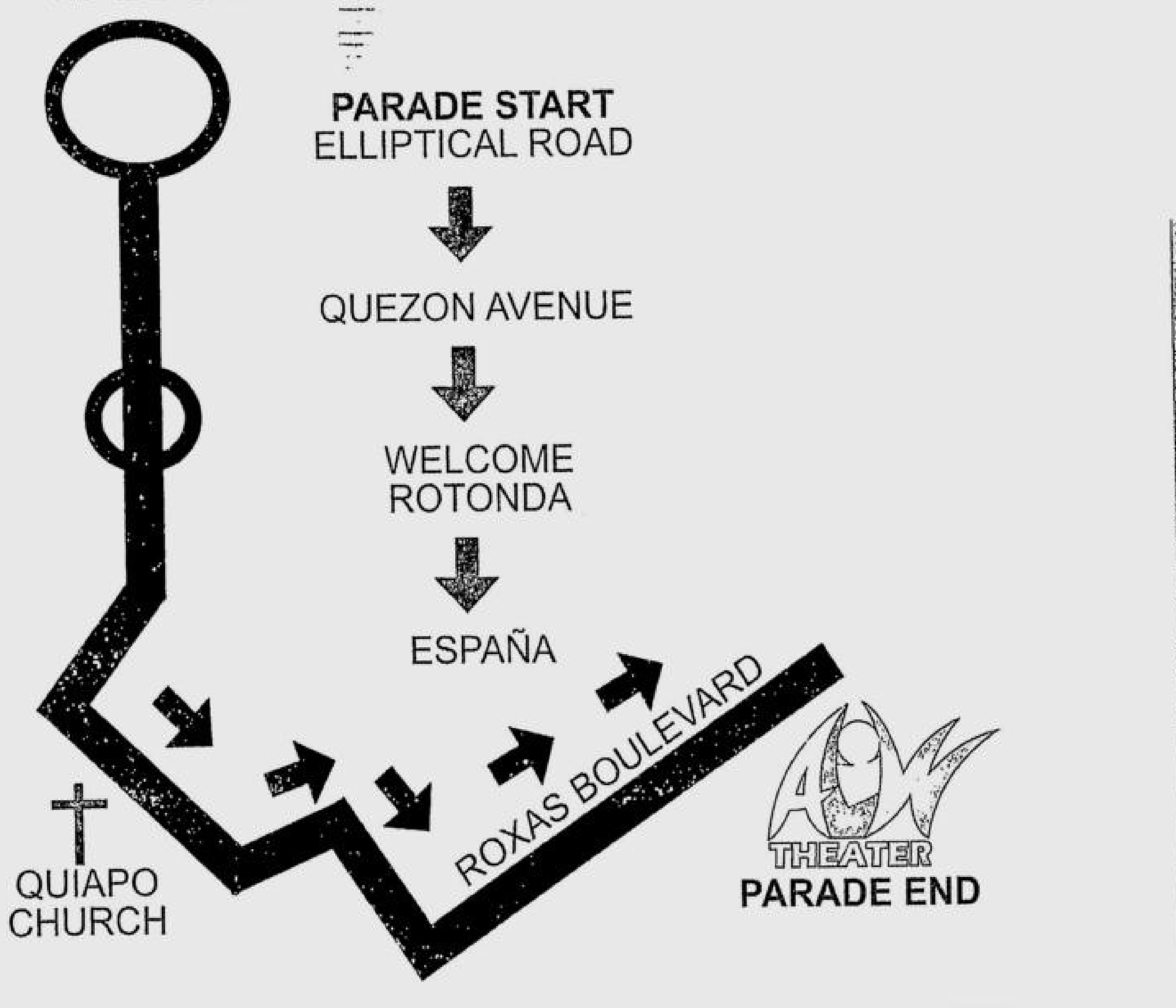

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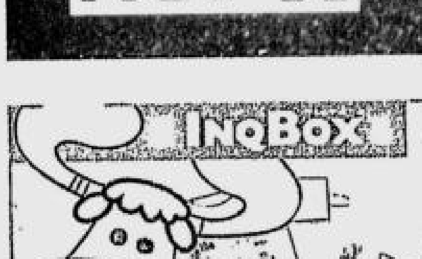
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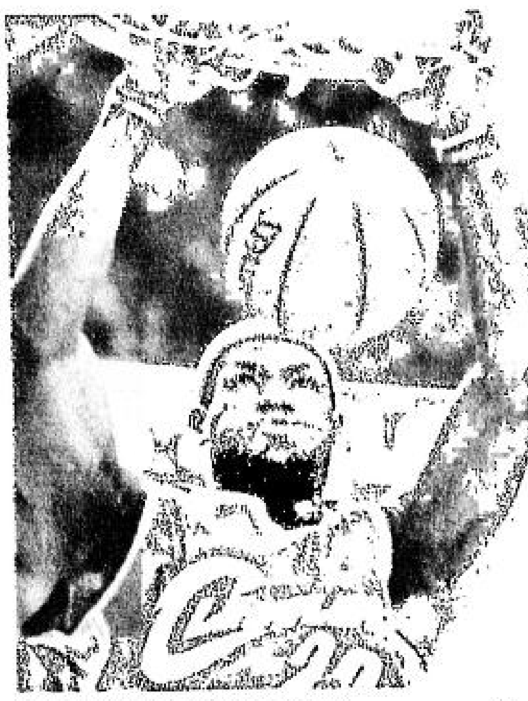

JAMES: Cleveland's top scorer. AP

James boosts Cavs

Nowitzki stars in Mavs triumph

CHICAGO—LEBRON James scored a game high 37 points to lead the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 108-100 victory over the Chicago Bulls in the NBA on Thursday.

Zydrunas Ilgauskas contributed 25 points and 11 rebounds for the Cavaliers while Damon Jones chipped in with 15 points, including three consecutive three-pointers in the final quarter.

Ben Gordon led Chicago with 22 points and Andres Nocioni added a season-high 21 points and 10 rebounds.

Trailing 79-71, the Cavaliers rallied in the fourth quarter behind a 15-0 run keyed by Jones' three consecutive three-pointers to turn the deficit into an 89-81 lead they did not surrender to register their fourth successive win.

"We got inside and fouled a lot," said Ilgauskas. "We tried to play the inside-outside game and it worked getting us to the free throw line."

In Sacramento, Dirk Nowitzki scored a season best 37 points and grabbed 10 rebounds to spark the Dallas Mavericks to a 105-95 win over the Kings.

Jason Terry added 19 points and Devin Harris 15 points while Josh Howard logged a double-double with 14 points and 13 rebounds helping the Mavericks to their fourth win in five games.

Mike Bibby led Sacramento with 22 points as the Kings slumped to their fourth successive defeat. *Reuters*

CLASSIC OPEN

5 gallopers dispute P1M top purse

By Musong R. Castillo

CARMONA, CAVITE—THE BEST GALLOPERS in the land slug it out in the last rich race of the year with bragging rights also at stake in today's running of the 2005 Philracom Classic Open Championship.

Real Spicy, Speed Advantage and imported filly Wild Orchid are the stellar names in the compact, five-horse field gunning for the P1 million top prize in the race to be disputed over 2,000 meters at the San Lazaro Leisure Park here.

Thywillbedone and Cover Girl round out the runners in the all-comers' championship, even as four mares make their final appearance in an official race in the All-Imported Farewell Race earlier.

Presidential Gold Cup winner Speed Advantage will have a new partner in veteran Manolito F. Daquis after Fernando Raquel Jr. opted to mount Wild Orchid, the Don Juan Derby champ and this year's top import.

Jesse B. Guce rides Real Spicy for the first time, with the winner of the Triple Crown's third leg itching for redemption after three close shaves.

The handsome chestnut colt Real Spicy has the staying abilities for the long grind, while Speed Advantage and Wild Orchid can both break out of the gates hard and battle for the early pace if they choose to.

Speed Advantage has earned more than P6.5 million after winning 18 of 24 starts this year. The son of Royal Premiere out of Trudy Capote has never placed lower than third in his six losses.

Second place will still be worth a hefty P376,750 and third P209,250. The winning breeder gets to pocket P50,000.

Catwalk Pia (Daquis), Royal Lantana (Den Camanero), Cosanne (Pat Dilema) and Cryptorose (RC Baldonido) are the runners in the imports stakes that has a P210,000 top purse.

SPORTSWATCH

GCAP bares 8-derby sked

EIGHT BIG 5-COCK DERBIES WILL BE PRESENTED by the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) at the San Juan Coliseum beginning Jan. 4 with Sagupaan Complexor 3000 as exclusive sponsor. Other schedules will be on Jan. 25, Feb. 15, March 15 and 22, May 3 and 24 and June 21. The GCAP derbies will serve as the basis in selecting the 2006 Cocker of the Year, who will receive a hefty cash prize, according to GCAP stalwart Patrick Antonio. Aside from the derby circuit, Antonio said the 35-member strong GCAP will also hold the Big Event 8-Cock Derby with the support of the SJC management.

Makati 6-cocker Dec. 26, 28

TWO MORE ROUNDS OF THE PAMASKONG SALPUkan 6-cock derby are scheduled at Makati Coliseum on Dec. 26 and 28. Participants with scores of 1, 1.5 and 2 points will compete on Monday in the derby which dangles P3 million and a Toyota Innova. Those with 2.5 and 3 points challenge one another on Wednesday. Leading the pack are 17 cockers who posted three wins each: Boy de Roca (two entries), Tony Lasala, Joel Ocsena, Bong Garcia, Rey Briones, Emil Chua, Lito Orillaza, Bernie Arthur, Boy Javier and Carrie Chua, R. Diokno, Butchoy Olano, Leo Leyba, Michael Monillas, Mike Romulo, E. R. Domingo and Pahamak entry. For inquiries, call 896-3545 or 895-6475.

Asistio tows young guns over Casas-led veterans

TONTON ASISTIO FIRED A FOUR-under-par 68 and Cyna Rodriguez carded a 72 to lead the present jungolfers to a big victory over the Cassius Casas-led alumni in recent 30th anniversary tournament of the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines at the Riviera Golf and Country Club Couples in Silang, Cavite.

The top 20 scorers of the present crop of jungolfers assembled a 1570 total, beating Casas, who fired a day-best 67, and the other alumni by 18 strokes.

The Toyota Innova put up by Toyota Balintawak's Cosco Oben as hole in one prize was not won.

Samsung Electronics Phils., Nike through its local distributor Pacsport, Philippine Airlines, Unilever, SportsPlus and Riviera Golf & Country Club were the major backers.

Minor sponsors include Smart, PlyoSports, Vernida Realty, First Asia Mobile, Garsworth Marketing, Snickers, Custom Clubmakers, Sunbolt, Golf Gallery, BAYO, Mayor Freddie Tinga, Mayor Areng Poblete, Regent Travel, Marin Sports, Ford Edsa, Antonio Hernandez, Ramar Printing, Citimotors, JC Master Supplies, Client Logic, Cross Link, Information Professionals, DDT Konstruct, FR Sevilla Industrial & Dev't Corp., Alpa Plumbing Works, LJ Industrial Fabrication, Voltage Electrical Contractor, GF & Partners Architects, INQUIRER Golf, Tropiko, LSG Manufacturing, Novo Jeans and Shirts, Lydia's Lechon, NBF water and waste water and Salemaire.

Meanwhile, the Alabang Jungolf Invitational will be held on Tuesday, Dec 27. Tee-off time is 7 a.m. Players are requested to call Jungolf or Alabang to register.

The results:

Class A: Boys—68 Tonton Asistio, 75 IG Gutierrez, 77 Miko Yee; Girls—76 Debbie de Villa, 80 Crystal Superal, 81 Beverly Mendoza

ASISTIO: Four-under card

Class B: Boys—75 Kim Ho Joon, 80 Marcel Puyat, 83 Mosha Baldo; Girls—72 Cyna Rodriguez, 76 Regine de Guzman 76, 87 Paulina Sotto

Class C: Boys—82, 84 Miguel Tabuena, 85 Cho Hee Won; Girls—86 Maan Legaspi, 86 Lee Jung Hwa, 90 Katya dela Cruz

Class D: Boys—77 JR Gonzales, 80 Miggy Yee, 82 AR Ramos; Girls—89 Andie Unson, 92 Marvi Monsalve, 93 Felicia Medalla

Class E: Boys—69 Justin Dy, 75 Ivan Monsalve, 88 Paolo Romero; Girls—66 Kim Min Gi, 74 Claire Legaspi, 78 Janella Buen

Class F: Boys—67 Lanz Uy, 75 Ryan Monsalve, 78 Tommy Agojo; Girls—71 Abby Arevalo, 97 Chloe Reyes

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www.waterfronthotels.net

Manila Pavilion Hotel
UN Avenue, Ermita, Manila, 1000
Tel. (632) 526-1212 /fax (632) 526-2552
www.manilapavilion.com.ph.

Garden Plaza Hotel & Suites
1030 Belen St., Paco, Manila
Tel. (632) 522-4835/ fax (632) 522-4840

City Garden Suites
1158A Mabini St., Ermita, Manila
Tel. 536-1451 Fax. 524-4844
Email:cityreservations@citygardenhotels.com

City Garden Hotel-Makati
Makati Ave., cor. Kalayaan St., Makati City
Tel. (02) 899-1111Fax. (02) 899-1415
Email: makaticitygardenhotels.com

Palm Plaza Hotel
Pedro Gil corner M. Adriatico Sts., Manila
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www.palmplazahotel.com

Royal Mandaya Hotel
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Camp John Hay Manor
Loakan Road, Baguio City
Tel. (074) 446-0231 to 50

City Travel Hotel
15 Kisad Road, Baguio City
Tel. (074) 445-0456 / Fax (074) 445-0457

Golden Pine Hotel and Restaurant
Intersection of Carino St. and Legarda Road, Baguio City
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Fax. (074) 446-0704
Email: goldenpineholte@skyinet.net

Taal Vista Hotel
Managed by Fuego Hotels & Properties
Km. 60 Aguinaldo Highway, Tagaytay City
Tel. (632) 886-4325, (6346) 413-1000
Email : taalvista@fuegohotels.com

Summer Place Hotel
Km. 288 Marcos Highway, Baguio City
Tel. :(074) 446.0560, 446.5400-01
www.SummerPlaceBaguio.com

The Regent Hotel
Elias, Angeles St., Naga City
Tel. (6354) 4722626 / Fax (6354) 4722525

Holiday treats at Edsa Shang

"IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A lot like Christmas..." and everything is ready at Edsa Shangri-La, for this glorious celebration with a choice of mouth-watering feasts all throughout the holidays.

Plain and simple or fancy and all dressed up, savor the sumptuous Chinese cuisine at Summer Palace. Executive Chinese chef Stephen Tam prepares his special Christmas and New Year set menus from Dec. 1 to Jan. 1. Gather family and friends to celebrate the holidays at the new Coffee Shop opening on Dec. 23. Make Advent Family Lunch extra special as kiddy activities await diners all Sundays of December. Relax your mind, rest your senses from the holiday rush, and savor the culinary artistry of authentic Japanese cuisine at Senju. Resident Japanese Chef Kiyoshi Ogawa prepares genuine Japanese specialties for the Christmas and New Year Set menus. Welcome Christmas and New Year with Paparazzi's set menus and delectable dessert buffets.

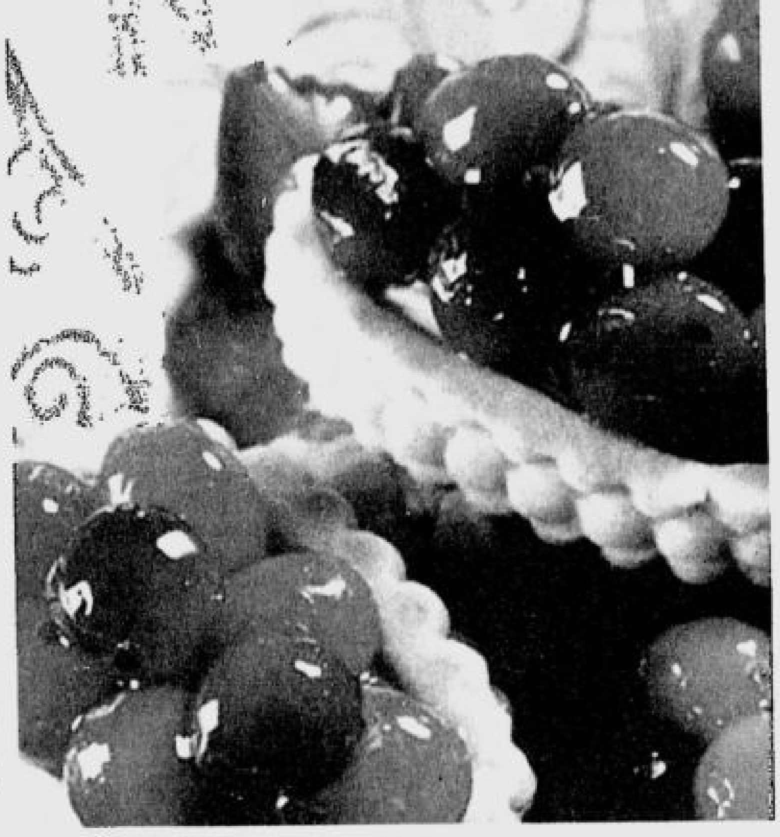
Out with the old and in with the new. It is that one day of the year where it all begins. Welcome the New Year in grand style and dance the night away to 2006 at the Lobby Lounge. Get into the groove with Kearney Street and Acoustic Anthology as we say goodbye to 2005.

Listen to the well-loved Christmas carols sung by The Manila Chamber Choir everyday at 6 to 8 p.m. from Dec. 16 to 24 also at the Lobby Lounge.

Naughty or nice, Santa Claus will be happy to see you at the Lobby for some warm holiday greetings and picture taking everyday from Dec. 16 to 24 starting at 5 to 8 p.m.

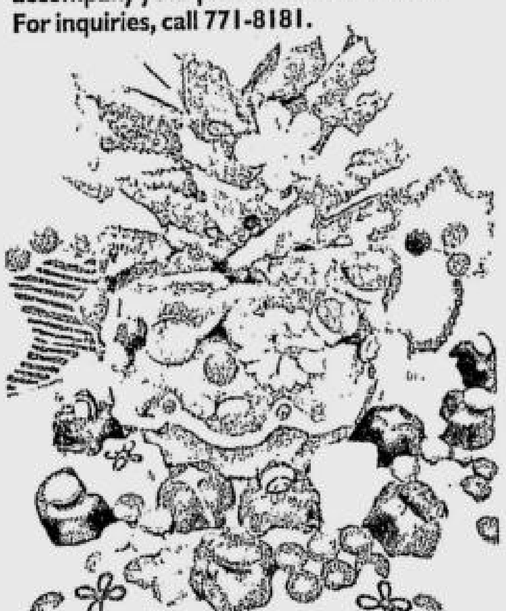
Reflect on the true meaning of Christmas in the celebration of the Holy Mass on Dec. 24 at 10 p.m. at the Isla Ballroom; Dec. 25, 10 a.m. at the Garden Ballroom and Jan. 1, 2006, 10 a.m. at the Isla Ballroom.

For inquiries and reservations on Edsa Shangri-La's Holiday Celebrations, please call 633-8888 extensions 2738 or 2739.



12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS BUFFET AT THE BELLEVUE

For twelve days leading to Christmas, the definitive dining destination of the south, The Bellevue Hotel, offers different kebab items and homey buffet selections for a more festive and flavorful holiday season. From Dec. 15 to 25, treat the palate to a new adventure everyday and your ears too, with live jazz music to accompany the splendid menu. On Dec. 24 and 25 let the angelic voices of the Tala Children's Choir accompany your pleasant dinner buffet. For inquiries, call 771-8181.



Mandarin Oriental's Holiday room packages

SPEND THE YULETIDE SEASON WITH loved ones and friends with Mandarin Oriental, Manila's exquisite accommodation packages for local residents and expatriates with valid alien certificate of residency, for a chance to win the ultimate two-night dream vacation experiences for two. Luxurious vacation treats include accommodations at Mandarin Oriental, Macau via Air Macau, and at the renowned Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong courtesy of Cathay Pacific. Holiday room packages start at P3,800++ for a superior room, single or double occupancy, inclusive of Oriental breakfast for two and complimentary local calls; and at P6,500++ for Club rooms, inclusive of the requisite Club amenities.

Other delightful room packages designed for Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve stays are the Emerald, Ruby, and Diamond packages, starting at P5,950++ which includes Deluxe room for two persons with Oriental breakfast, Christmas or New Year's Eve dinner for two adults at Captain's Bar, complimentary local calls, late check-out until 4 p.m., and complimentary pressing of two pieces suit/dress per stay. Holiday room packages are valid from Dec. 15 to 29, and from Jan. 1 to 8, 2006. Special rates starting from P4,500++ apply for stays on Dec. 30 and 31.

Those who will avail of the holiday room packages until Dec. 31 and those who have availed of local residents packages from February 25, 2005, are eligible for a chance to win the ultimate two-night dream vacation experiences for two in the Jan. 2, 2006 grand draw.

For details on holiday room packages, call 750 8888 extension 2304 or through local toll free number at 1-800-1888-4524 (room reservations); for holiday dining and offerings, extension 2401 (food and beverage).

Spectacular New Year's blast at Taal Vista Hotel

WELCOME 2006 IN STYLE WITH a lavish dinner buffet, a fantastic party, and amazing fireworks display amidst the splendor of the Taal Volcano. The breathtaking Taal Vista Hotel invites everyone to spend the New Years weekend in cool and crisp Tagaytay. Enjoy the luxurious ambiance and accommodations with the "Overnight Package" for only P6,500 net (Dec. 31 to Jan. 1, 2006) which includes an overnight stay in a superior room, Dec 31st dinner buffet with wine and buffet breakfast plus a New Years Blast party ticket. Avail of the 50 percent discount for kids 12 years and below sharing a room with their parents. Guests may also opt to party till the wee hours of the morning at the "Spectacular New Years Blast Party" (P2,100 net/per person) starting with a dinner buffet and followed by a magic show, an all-night live comedy band called Arpie & D' Multivitamins, a display of fireworks, sparkling wine and fun party favors.

Taal Vista Hotel now boasts off new facilities. Treat yourself to a relaxing and rejuvenating massage at The Ylang Ylang Spa or cool off at the free-form swimming pool by the new wing. The gym is now available for the more health-conscious guests while the new game room and the kiddie area are on hand for the convenience and enjoyment of the younger hotel guests.

Taal Vista Hotel is managed by Fuego Hotels & Properties. For inquiries and reservations please call (02) 886.4325 / (046) 413.1000. Log on to www.taalvistahotel.com or www.fuegohotels.com

People, Events & Products

DUMEX SYMPOSIUM ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Dumex Phils., Inc. President Mei Choy welcomes guests during the symposium on balancing emotional and mental intelligence entitled "Life Skills for Your Child: IQ gets him through, EI gets him through life" held recently at the Manila Peninsula Hotel. In order to provide Filipinos with more information about the latest developments on the concept of emotional intelligence or EI, Dumex Philippines invited Dr. Marc Brackett, Associate Research Director of the Health, Emotions & Behavior Laboratory of Yale University to discuss the importance of emotional intelligence. Dumex products and services continuously undergo upgrades to address the dynamic needs of its growing market. Proceeds from the lecture will bolster Dumex's commitment to support the Department of Social Welfare Development's (DSWD) feeding programs for indigent children.

DTSI completes 2nd Turnkey at IRMC

DTSI (DIVERSIFIED TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS INTERNAtional Inc.), a leading onshore and offshore systems integrator and technology solutions and services provider, and Avaya Top business Partner of the Year, completes its 2nd Turnkey project at IRMC (IntelliRisk Management Corp.), a premier provider of customer management solutions specializing in collections, accounts receivable management and customer retention services through its global call center network of nearly 6,000 employees. With duration of only 2 months, DTSI completed 2 IRMC sites, both located at the Tower 2 RCBC Plaza. Working as a technology and service partner, DTSI aided IRMC from pre-construction to post-construction. "DTSI has met my expectations and more." Said IRMC vice president for operations, Glen Odom. "The Turnkey project has allowed me and continues to allow me to focus more on my core activities." The Turnkey eradicates business disruption and risk in a complete end-to-end solution. Turnkey will rapidly establish your Philippines contact center with minimum client overhead from a single point of contact: DTSI. Turnkey benefits include site selection, architectural build-out, technology infrastructure, staff recruitment and training and legal and financial regulations.

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SATURDAY Special
Text us your feedback: inquirer sat name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)
Editor Nestor U. Torre
Assistant Editor Rito P. Asilo

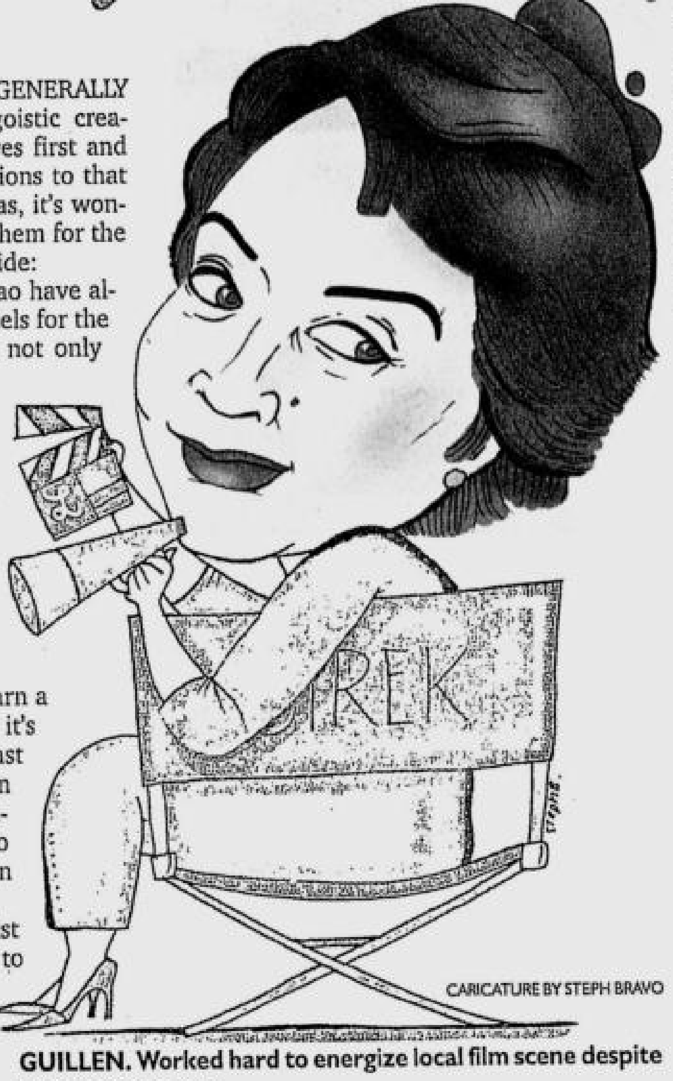
Thanks for the inspiration!

By Nestor U. Torre

SHOW BIZ PEOPLE ARE GENERALLY thought to be self-centered, egoistic creatures who think about themselves first and last. But, there are great exceptions to that desultory rule, and this Christmas, it's wonderfully fitting to say thanks to them for the inspiration they continue to provide:

Tintin Bersola and Julius Babao have always struck us as great role models for the Filipino youth. The Babaos are not only competent at what they do, but they also have great respect for their work and the many viewers they connect with everyday.

In addition, they lead God-centered lives, are enthusiastic supporters of the arts, and are hands-on parents to their baby daughter, Antonia.



CARICATURE BY STEPH BRAVO

GUILLEN. Worked hard to energize local film scene despite its fractious nature.

Most admired

Indeed, young people can learn a lot from Tintin and Julius, and it's no surprise that the Southeast Asian Foundation for Children and Television's Anak TV Seal jurors recently hailed them as two of the most admired people on TV.

We also thank National Artist Eddie Romero for continuing to inspire us with his exceptional life and work. Eddie is the first to scoff at his "exceptional stature," but we think it's wonderfully inspiring that someone of his "emeritus" rank is still excited about making movies.

Yes, the venerable film artist will soon be making his first digital feature, and young filmmakers should be tickled pink to learn that our only living National Artist for film is joining them in their alternative film mode!

We trust that they, too, will think of filmmaking, not as a temporary fun activity, but as the work of a lifetime!

During her three years as chair of the Film Development Council of the Philippines, Laurice Guillen worked hard to energize the local film scene despite its fractious nature.

We admire her for sticking to her guns despite the difficulties involved, and thank her for coming up with the Cinemalaya alternative film festival, which has given breaks to a number of gifted new filmmakers, and has helped rescue and even revolutionize the languishing Filipino movie industry.

Despite our abiding interest in helping new talents learn the ropes and come into their own, we're also fond of our cinematic tradition, especially of the pioneering contributions of the "filmmaking families" of the Philippines—the Vera-Perezes, the De Leons, the Santiagos, etc. They made movies that they were proud of, and we hope that today's production companies can recapture that pride and fervor.

Legacy

And so, we thank those families' heirs—Marichu V.P. Maceda and siblings (and their much-loved *Mama* Nene), Mike and Manito de Leon, Cirio and Digna Santiago—not only for the legacy, but for continuing to do more than their share for the movie industry that their parents were so devoted to.

Thanks, too, to another "child of the movies," Oscar Moreno's daughter, Boots Anson-Roa, for working so hard for the Filipino film industry—as performer, teacher, head of Mowelfund, etc., etc.

And to Marilou Diaz-Abaya, for her Asia Pacific Film Institute, which is training the filmmakers of tomorrow, and her Advent TV movie, "Maging Akin Muli," which has greatly energized the emerging field of religious productions in this country.

Difficulties

Finally, special thanks to the other female filmmakers in the Philippines—Joyce Bernal, Olivia Lamasan, Rory Quintos, and emerging "digital comers" like Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil, Ellen Ramos, Michiko Yamamoto, Rica Arevalo—for coming up with such good work despite the many difficulties they have to hurdle.

To all of the good people in local show business, thanks for the inspiration!

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Remembering those well-loved Christmas carols

LAST WEEK, WE WROTE about how the composers and lyricists of popular holiday ditties, "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Joy to the World" and "The Little Drummer Boy," found inspiration and motivation to write these well-loved Yuletide tunes.

Timeless

But, we can't write about timeless Christmas carols *and* not include "Silent Night." The song's history goes back to a small alpine village (Oberndorf) in Austria.

On Christmas Eve in 1818, the organ of St. Nicholas Church was broken, a development that dismayed the townsfolk, *but* inspired parish priest Joseph Mohr to give his two-year-old poem, "Silent Night," to his musician-friend, Franz Xavier Gruber, who set it to music.

Since the organ was broken, arrangement for the melody was written for guitars, and the simple score was finished for midnight mass—and led to the premiere performance of the most famous Christmas carol of all time!

Another favorite holiday hymn, "O Holy Night," originated in France. In 1847, Placide Cappeau de Roquemaure was the wine commissioner of a small French town. Known more for his poetry than his church attendance, Placide was shocked when his parish priest asked him to write a poem for Christmas mass.

Request

On a bumpy ride to Paris, the commissioner considered the clergy's request. He used the Gospel of Luke as his guide to imagine witnessing the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

SHOW BIZ Q & A

Rito P. Asilo

By the time he arrived in the City of Lights, a poem, "Cantique de Noel," was finished. Then, Roquemaure approached renowned composer Adolphe Charles Adams to write the music for his verse.

Initially, Adams rejected the idea—since he was of Jewish ancestry! But, three weeks later, "O Holy Night" was performed at midnight mass on Christmas Eve. It was later translated into English by John Sullivan Dwight.

On the other hand, "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" was originally a slow and somber tune, written by Charles Wesley (brother of the Methodist Church's founder, John Wesley). A century after it was written, Felix Mendelssohn composed a *cantata* and decided to use the song to commemorate the invention of the printing press—thus the song's celebratory lilt was born.

Baubles and bells

"O Christmas Tree" (O Tannenbaum), a Christmas ditty popularized by Nat "King" Cole, is a traditional German carol, whose composer was never known. The practice of bringing a tree inside the home and decorating it with candy, baubles and bells was started in the 19th century, an annual tradition that is immortalized in the song's lyrics.

Originally, the Christmas tree is part of the pre-Christian tradition of the "12 *Rauhnächte*" (12 harsh, wild nights)—since winters in North Germany were harsh. Later, this became the "12 Nights of Christmas." A tree is put up on Dec. 24, and is taken down either after New Year or on Jan. 6, the "12th Night."

COLE. Popularized the German ditty, " O Tannenbaum."

MENDELSSOHN. Upbeat version of "Hark the Herald Angels Sing."

The first report of a decorated tree is from Strasburg. A traveler writes about his recollection of Christmas in 1605: "Trees were decorated with roses made from colored paper, apples, wafers, yellow mica, sugar …"

Have a happy, safe and holy Christmas!

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Telephone: 633.2227 / 6337851 loc. 171
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3 (DTS) KING KONG
4 (GOLD DTS) CHICKEN LITTLE
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6 GOLD (SDDS) KING KONG
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3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG

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3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE (SNEAK PREVIEW)

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3 RESERVED
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1 KING KONG
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Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
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2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
4 (DTS) KING KONG

Cine Nepo
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2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
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3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
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3 (DTS) KING KONG
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2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
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2 IN HER SHOES
3 (DOLBY) THE MYTH
4 (DTS) THE FOG

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
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2 KING KONG
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(Gapan)
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2 CINEMA 2 OPENS ON DEC. 25, 2005 "EXODUS" & ENTENG KABISOTE

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2 THE MYTH

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) WEREWOLF GINGER SNAP-2
2 KUNG LILIGAYA KA SA PILING NG IBA
3 LOLLIPOP & ROSES
4 (DTS) UNDERWORLD

Lianas MovieCity
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1 (DOLBY) KING KONG
2 HULA MO HULI KO
3 (DTS) JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 LOLLIPOP & ROSES
5 HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

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2 KING KONG
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 THE MYTH
2 LIGAYA KATUMBAS AY BUHAY

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Telephone No. (044) 600-3025
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 KING KONG

Cinemagic Pacific Mall
(Lucena City) tel. 6605271
1 THE MYTH
2 KING KONG
3
4

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

Jones Campos' Yuletide song

STREET SMART

Mandy Navasero

JONES T. CAMPOS, GLOBE TELECOM'S JOLLY PR man—and current president of the Public Relations Society of the Philippines—recently showed a different facet to his creative endeavors. This time, he composed a Christmas song, "Magmalahalan Tayo sa Pasko." Arranged by N. Arnel de Pano, the song was interpreted by a choir.

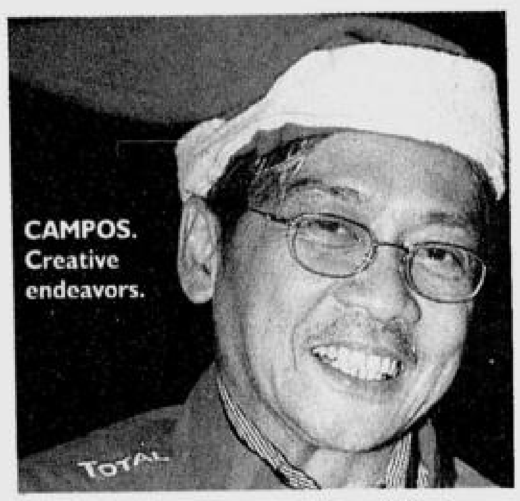
The CD contains seven tracks, including minus-one versions of its songs.

Heartfelt messages

Totel de Jesus said: "Listening to the carol in the early morning can brighten up your whole day, because its simple, catchy lyrics and radio-friendly music blend perfectly to impart heartfelt messages like loving freely, helping the needy, and overcoming loneliness by spreading peace and unconditional joy."

This may sound corny to Scrooges out there, but hey, these special feelings do matter even beyond the holiday season! Let's sing and dance to the beat of Campos' music. (Call 0917 818-1015.)

Meanwhile the mother of a former student called to share the wonderful news that her 19-year-old daughter, Denise Valdez, won the top prize in the photography competition sponsored by the Art Association of the Philippines.



CAMPOS. Creative endeavors.

On a sadder note, Corina Sarmiento, another former student, succumbed to cancer recently. Photographs she took, along with lovely black and white pictures of her (taken by daughter, Isa Sarmiento), adorned her wake.

In her honor, the Corinna Mutuc-Sarmiento Memorial Fund was set up for indigent cancer patients. Good Samaritans may call Ruby Macario at 843-3033 loc. 102 or 107.

Holiday treats

(Conclusion)

WORD OF MOUTH

Sandy Daza

HERE ARE MORE culinary suggestions for the Christmas rush:

21. Martha's Creations. The ultimate in children's cakes. Tel nos. 842-3836, 0917 520-7265.

22. Fruitcake—Maryann Villanueva-Cruz. Heavy, but not too sweet. Tel nos. 641-7176, 898-4742.

23. Chocolate almond crunch—Tina Gutierrez' delicious candies. Call 0917 822-4466.

24. Mango and guava jam—superior quality home-made jams. 0917 523-8759.

25. A winner! Slowly roasted Black Angus prime roast beef, by Chefs Mon and Monique Eugenio. Try their Angus Beef with Cabernet Sauvignon shallot *au jus*.

They also make a green peppercorn or Morel sauce with roast beef that can serve as the centerpiece of Christmas dinner. Call Mon at 0917 533-1155.

Exceptional

26. Chef Rox—Excellent bottled sauces. Exceptional food at Katre on Morato behind Alfredo's Steak House. Call 0918 907-2062.

27. Brun butter cake. Call Aling Trining at 810-7529.

Don't forget the true meaning of Christmas! Jesus was given to the whole world as a gift. To avail of that gift, we need to accept Him into our lives!

Merry Christmas!

Happy Eating!

Email sandy-daza@shaw.ca

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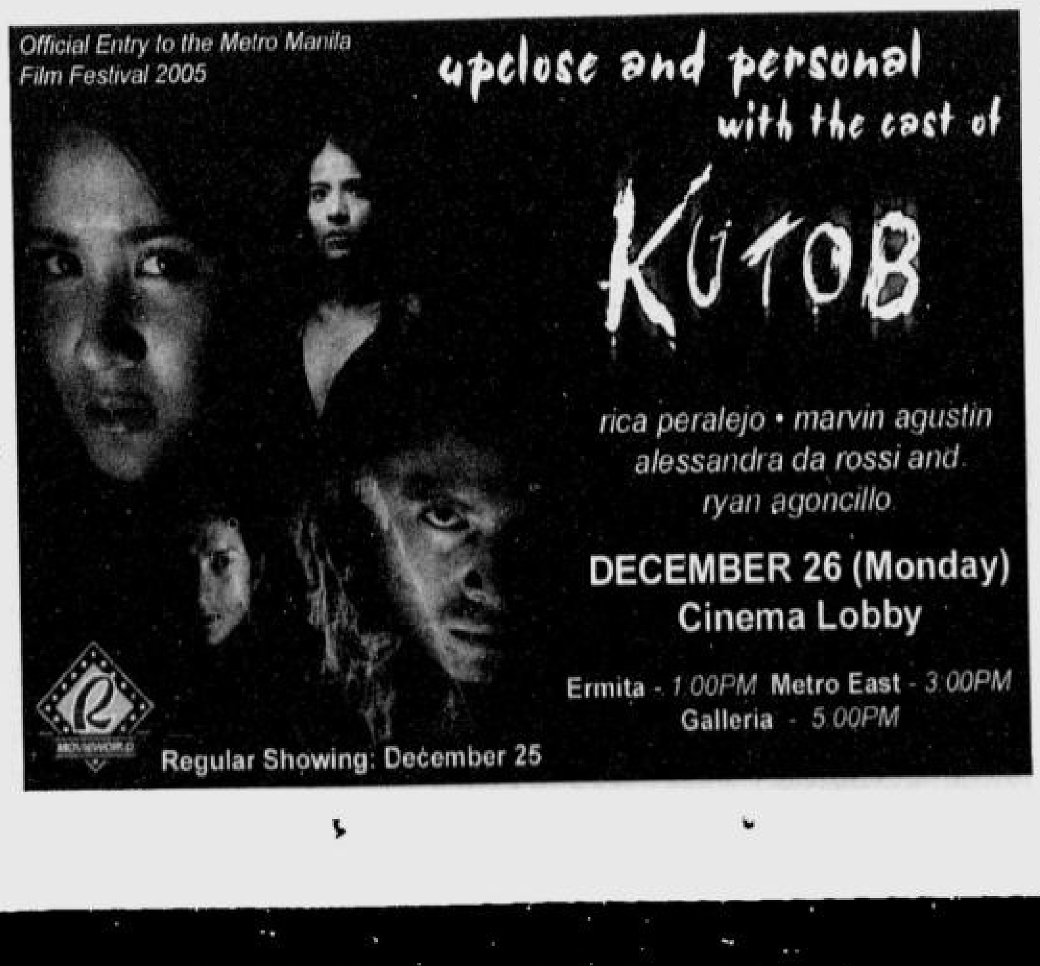


Official Entry to the Metro Manila Film Festival 2005
upclose and personal with the cast of
KUTOB
rica peralejo • marvin agustin
alessandra da rossi and
ryan agoncillo
DECEMBER 26 (Monday)
Cinema Lobby
Ermita - 1:00PM Metro East - 3:00PM
Galleria - 5:00PM
MOVIEWORLD
Regular Showing: December 25

How the Metro filmfest has evolved . . .

From page A2-6

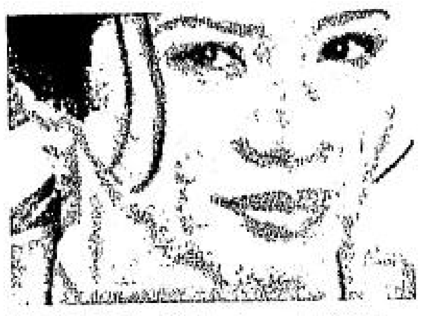
Since it was now a Christmas festival, at least some of its offerings should be for children, or for the family. This resulted in a subtle bias against "heavy" or "overly artistic" productions.

Another point of erosion was the control over the festival subsequently assumed by the MMDA. Once the Metro Manila mayors got into the act, the festival's criteria were further readjusted.

Clamor

The clamor for popular fare grew when more organizations benefited from subsidies drawn from the filmfest's annual net income. The bigger it was, the greater the subsidies those organizations received. So, it was preferred that filmfest entries have big stars, "commercial" appeal, etc.

There came a time in the '80s and '90s when the festival had become so commercial-minded that its annual awards lost much of their cachet. Some film buffs wondered why, if the festival had become so "popular," the generally mediocre entries had to compete for "quality" awards at all?



ZSA ZSA Padilla leads cast of "Ako Legal Wife."

More recently, there's been an effort to restore the festival's credibility, and some worthy entries have been screened and honored with awards. But, such improvements are too occasional to be relied on—and the filmfest has yet to fully rehabilitate itself.

Criticism

It has also opened itself up to criticism after relaxing its "one film per producer" rule. The argument for this could be the "lack" of producers who can bankroll expensive productions.

But, critics aren't convinced, and wish that the filmfest revert back to its original preference for quality productions. That way, there would certainly be enough producers whose movies would qualify for the filmfest.

The key question now is: Where is the film *audience* in this entire discussion? It's instructive to note that, when the filmfest was compromised in the '80s and '90s, resulting in poorer-quality productions, viewers transferred their allegiance to foreign blockbusters, resulting in the slump that the Filipino movie industry is still experiencing to this day!

Result

It's even more ironically instructive to see that, as a result of this, the local film industry is in some aspects back to where it was 30 years ago, when the Manila Film Festival successfully rescued if from the pits of penury.

If the filmfest had held on to its "quality" orientation, would the industry's current slump still have happened? We can't say for sure, but it's bittersweet food for thought.

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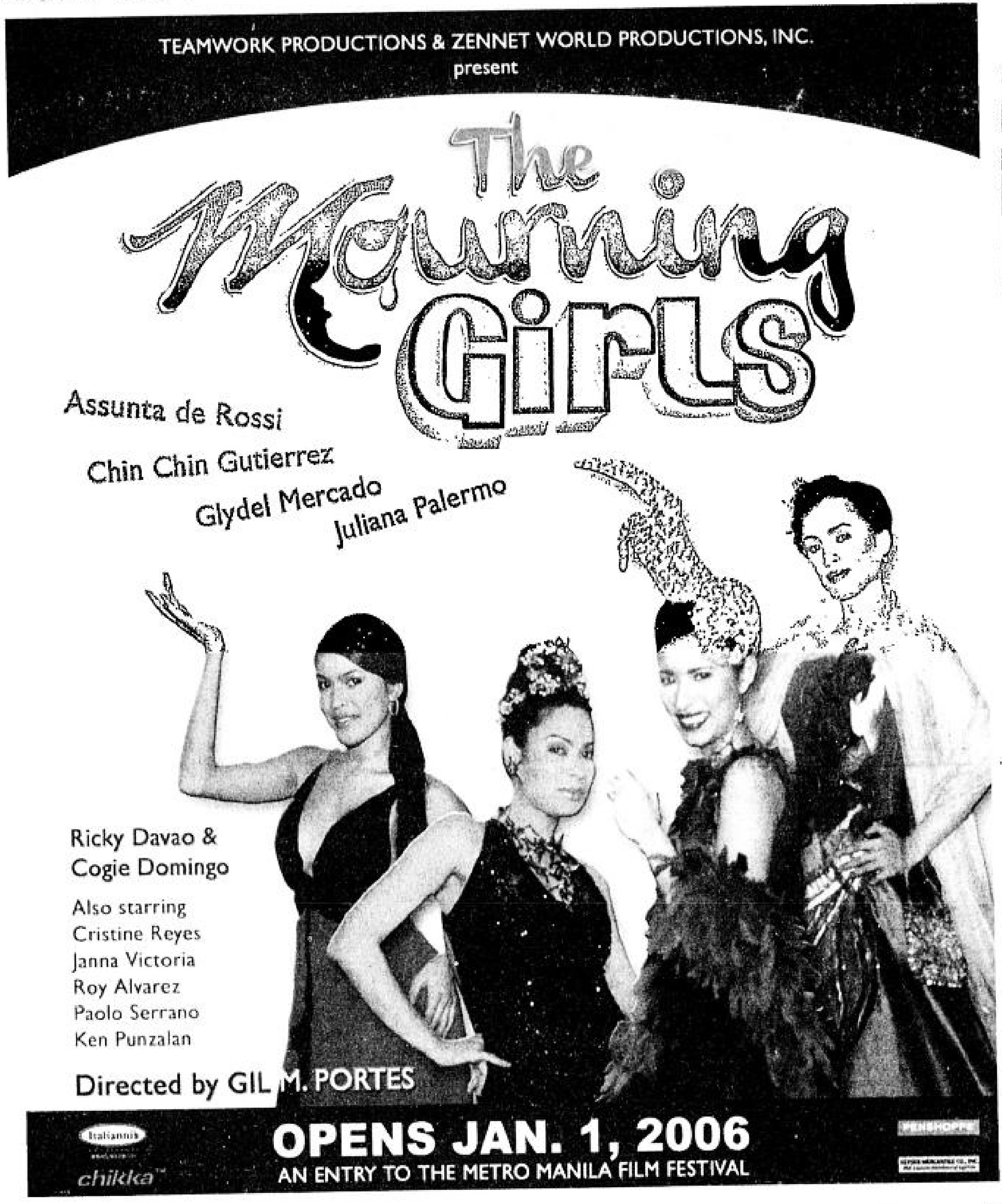
VIC SOTTO KRISTINE HERMOSA
ALICE DIXSON
OYO BOY SOTTO BING LOYZAGA AIZA SEGUERRA
JEFFREY QUIZON AND VICTOR NERI
Enteng Kabisote 2
DIRECTED BY TONY Y. REYES
DOLBY IN SELECTED THEATRES
OctoArts FILMS
OKAY KA FAIRY KO...
THE LEGEND CONTINUES
CHRISTMAS DAY 2005
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2005
FREE ENTENG MASK FOR EVERY PURCHASE OF 2 TICKETS ON OPENING DAY AT ALL SM CINEMAS. (PROMO GOOD WHILE SUPPLY LAST)



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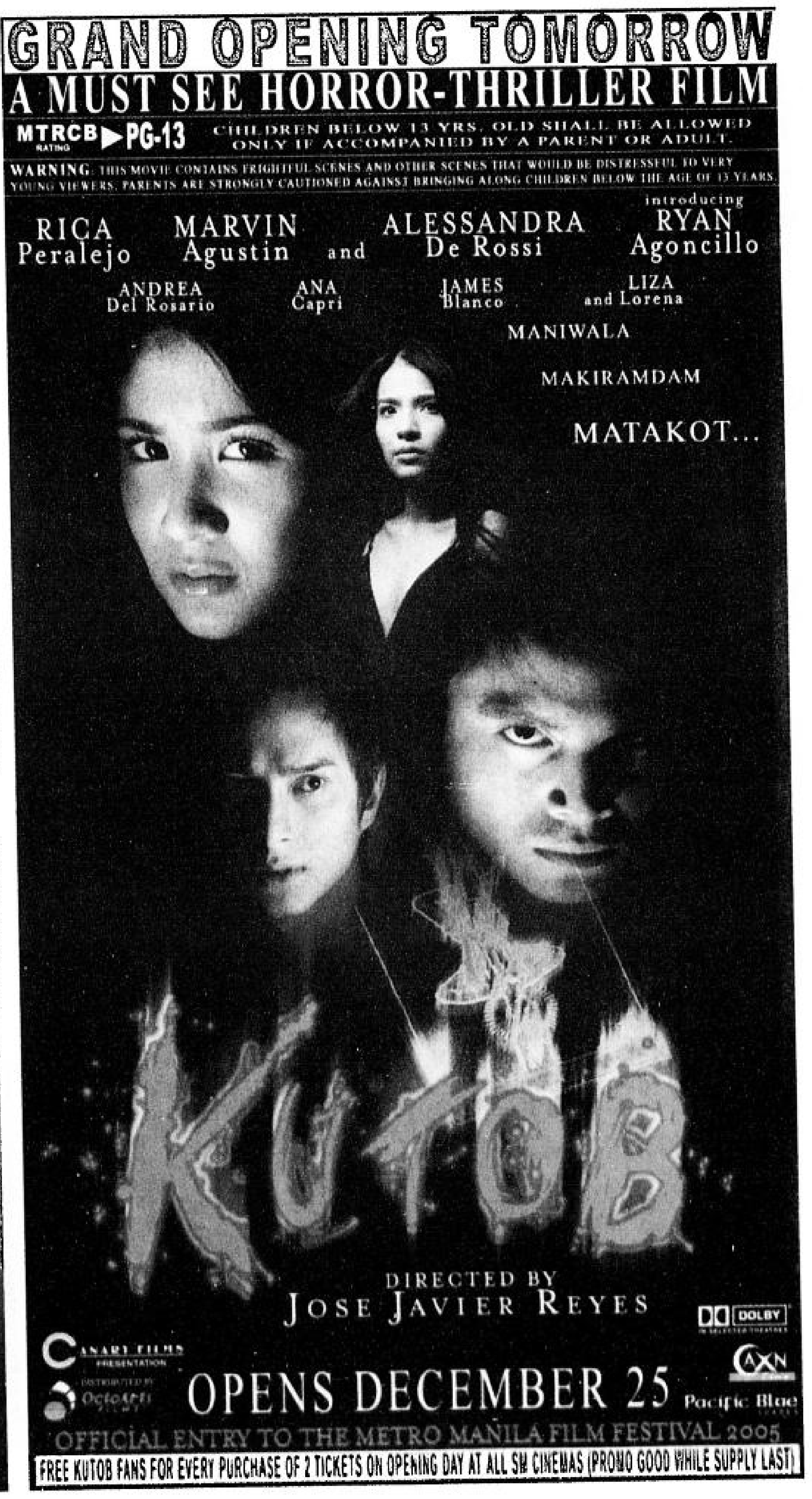

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ANDREA Del Rosario ANA Capri JAMES Blanco and LIZA Lorena
MANIWALA
MAKIRAMDAM
MATAKOT...
KUTOB
DIRECTED BY
JOSE JAVIER REYES
DOLBY
CANARY FILMS PRESENTATION
DISTRIBUTED BY OctoArts FILMS
OPENS DECEMBER 25
AXN
Pacific Blue
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KORN. Aggresive, agonized lyrics.

Korn retrospective is hefty but incoherent

By Noelani Torre

MUSIC ENTHUSIASTS, BE FOREWARNED:

Listening to Korn will not put you in the holiday spirit. Sentiments like "I'm gonna cut myself and watch the blood hit the ground" and "I flirt with suicide" aren't exactly Christmas-y! But then, nobody expects sweetness and light from the nu-metal group famed for their aggressive, agonized lyrics and raging, lower-than-low seven-stringed guitars.

Korn burst onto the scene more than 10 years ago, when their explosive self-titled debut album revitalized the lethargic rock scene. Composed of singer Jonathan Davis, guitarists James "Munky" Shaffer and Brian "Head" Welch, bassist Reginald "Fieldy Snuts" Arvizu, and drummer David Silveria, the band went on to multi-platinum releases and awards, and for a while there, they looked like they were on top of the world. But, the first signs of instability manifested themselves in the recent release of "Greatest Hits, Vol 1."

Resurgence

Not that the collection itself is a dud—it's more the timing of the thing. At a time when rock is experiencing a resurgence of bands hot enough to rock your world, this retrospective is what the "undisputed leaders of the funk metal movement" chose to give their audience.

There's also their most recent album, "See You on the Other Side," but *that* one came a bit too late, and it sounded too old—hardly any new ground broken there.

In itself, "Greatest Hits, Vol. 1" gives a good overview of the course that Korn has taken for the past decade. There are 17 hit tracks from their six previous albums—1994's "Korn," 1996's "Life Is Peachy," 1998's "Follow the Leader," 1999's "Issues," 2002's "Untouchables," and 2003's "Take A Look in the Mirror." There are two bonus tracks in their covers of Cameo's "Word Up!" and Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall."

The songs are classic Korn, and fans of the band will no doubt be familiar with most of them. However, there is a problem with the way the tracks are sequenced. The two opening songs, for some reason, *are* the covers.

This doesn't make much sense, because though they're good covers ("Word Up!" has Korn sounding improbably lighthearted), they *don't* really make much of an opening statement.

Raw

Also, the songs are arranged in reverse chronological order, a tack that makes the entire album sound incoherent. You start off with more polished and textured material that disintegrates steadily along the way—until you're left with raw, unsophisticated rage that makes singer Davis sound like a whiny adolescent.

It would have been a much more cohesive listening experience if they'd done it the other way around.

"POSO"
GLORIA ROMERO YASMIEN KURDI RAINIER CASTILLO MARCO ALCARAZ
BIBOY RAMIREZ JENINE DESIDERIO
and MS. AI AI DELAS ALAS
"AQUARIUM"
OGIE ALCASID
WILMA DOESNT REGGIE CURLEY PAUL SALAS
and ARA MINA
"LIHIM"
TANYA GARCIA
ELIZABETH OROPESA NONI BUENCAMINO RONNIE LAZARO
and MARK ANTHONY FERNANDEZ
SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 2k5
Meet & greet the stars on:
Dec. 24 at 1pm - Parade of Stars
Dec. 28 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 29 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 30 at 4pm - SM Southmall
DIRECTED BY URO DELA CRUZ RICO MARIA ILARDE RICHARD SOMES
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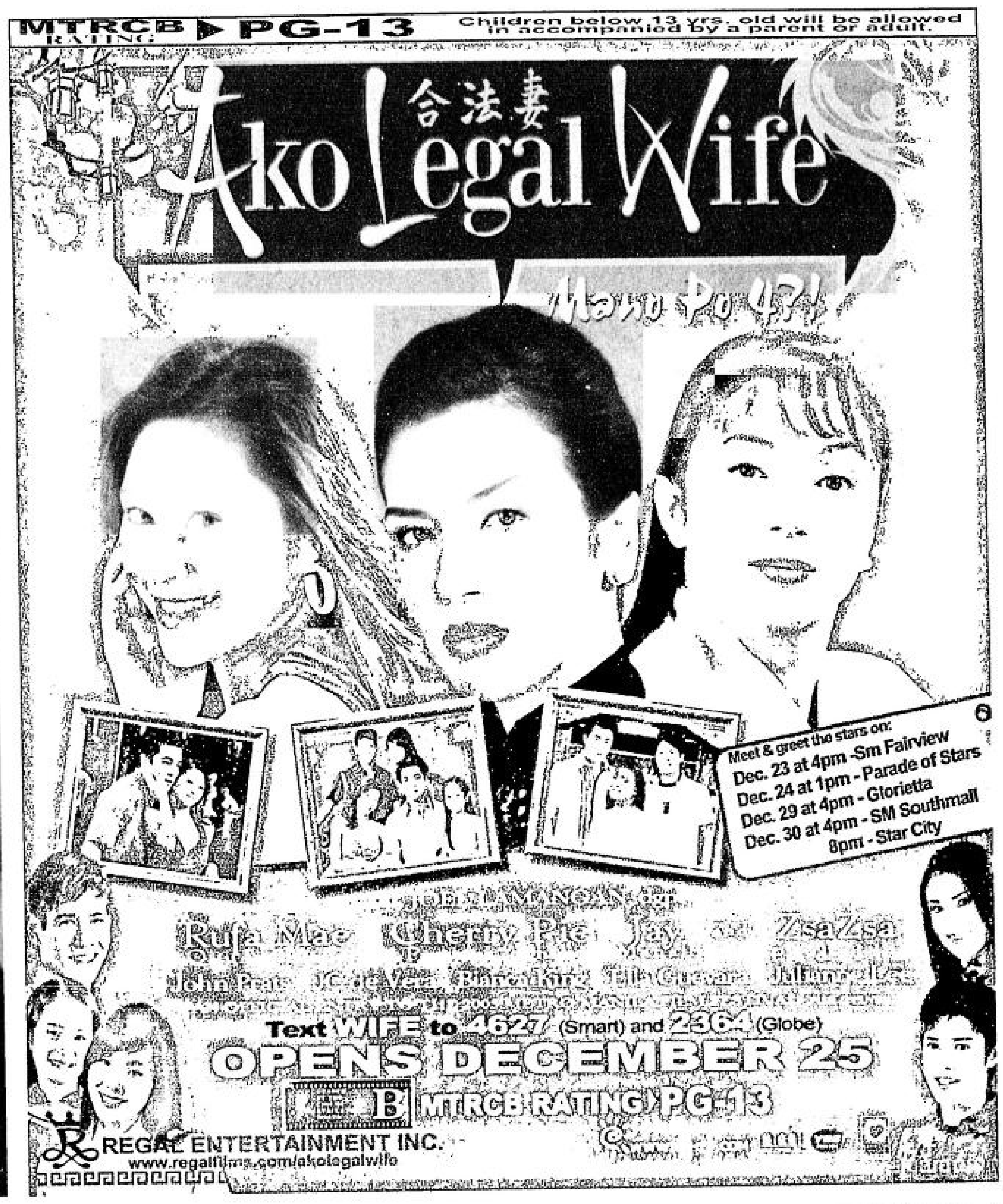

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Ako Legal Wife 合法妻
Mano Po 4?!
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Dec. 24 at 1pm - Parade of Stars
Dec. 29 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 30 at 4pm - SM Southmall
8pm - Star City
Rufa Mae Cherry Pie Jay and ZsaZsa
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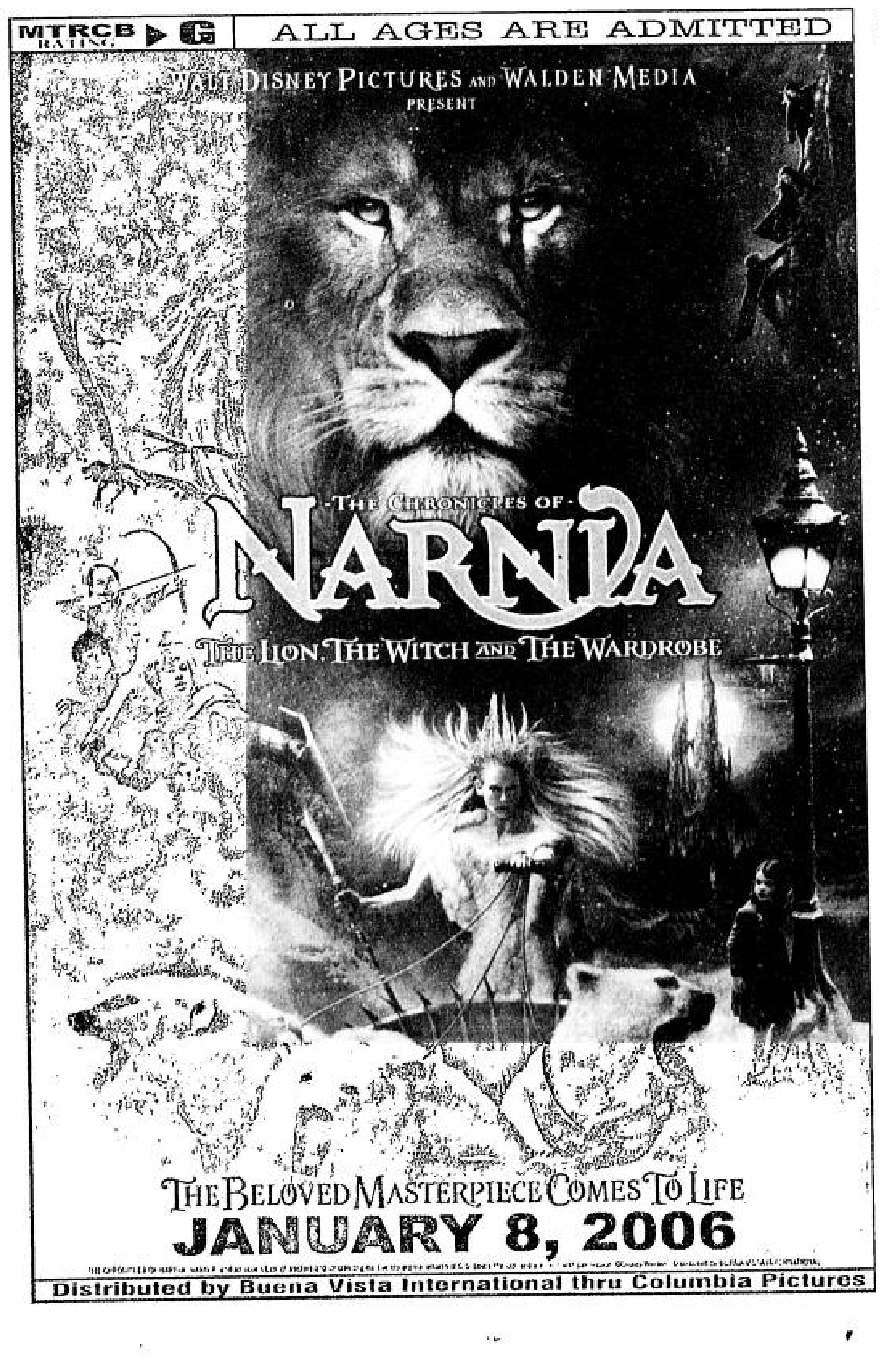

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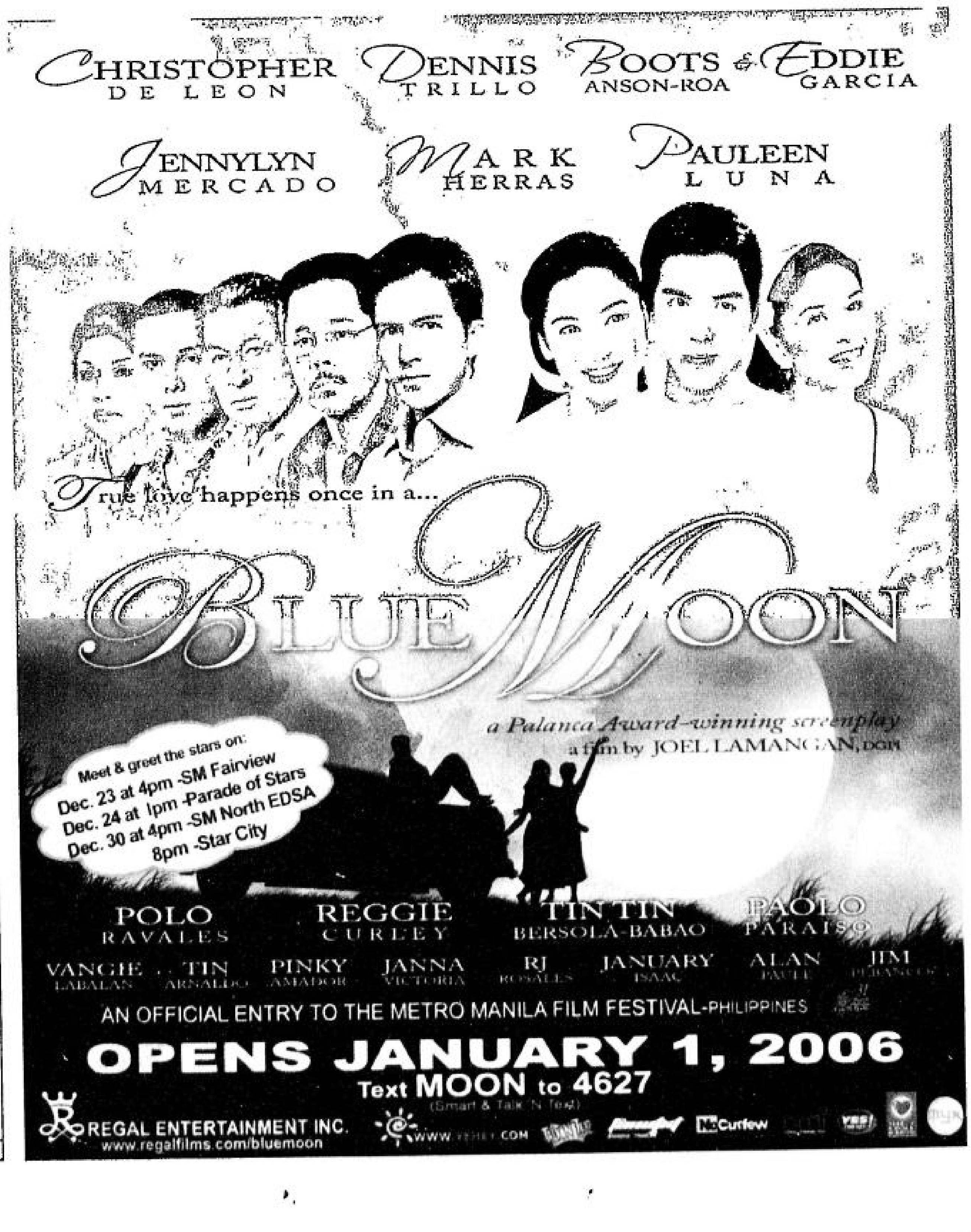

CHRISTOPHER DE LEON DENNIS TRILLO BOOTS ANSON-ROA & EDDIE GARCIA
JENNYLYN MERCADO MARK HERRAS PAULEEN LUNA
True love happens once in a...
BLUE MOON
a Palanca Award-winning screenplay
a film by JOEL LAMANGAN, DGPI
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Dec. 24 at 1pm -Parade of Stars
Dec. 30 at 4pm -SM North EDSA
8pm -Star City
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VANGIE LABALAN TIN ARNALDO PINKY AMADOR JANNA VICTORIA RJ ROSALES JANUARY ISAAC ALAN PAULE JIM PEBANCO
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Falling in love with Romania

By Arlina T. Onglao

BUDDY CUNANAN FIRST got me excited about Romania, having stayed there for almost three weeks. A most pleasant encounter with Romanian Ambassador Radu Homescu gave me a very good impression of the country. I then convinced friends to join me, and got a group of 15 ladies interested to see the place.

On our visit to Bucharest, we marvelled at the vastness and grandeur of the "House of the People" built by Communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu. This magnificent yet controversial building of 6,000 rooms reflects the work of the country's best architects and over 20,000 artisans who built it, using only Romanian materials and products such as marble, cherry and walnut paneling, crystal chandeliers, hand-woven tapestries, carpets and draperies. Now renamed the Palace of Parliament, it is the world's second largest building after the US Pentagon.

Side trip

Our side trip to Temple Castle in Campina gave me the goosebumps. The small castle, built by genius novelist and scientist Hasdeu in his daughter Julia's memory, used the design transmitted by Julia's spirit during their spiritist meetings. A huge statue of Jesus Christ stands imposingly inside the central dome of the temple. This is an eye-opener for anyone with a crisis of faith and unbelief in the afterlife.

A visit to Bran Castle, a dark though beautifully preserved fortress towering over a bed of stone, brought back memories of my childhood days. As if reliving some fairy tale, I gleefully ran around the castle, imagining I was playing hide-and-seek. This fortified medieval castle, often referred to as Dracula's Castle, was built in 1377 to protect nearby Brasov from invaders.

Overnight stay

An overnight stay in Sighisoara at Casa Wagner, a 400-year-old structure in the list of Unesco World Heritage Buildings, was a welcome treat after a whole day on the road. It was the perfect place for honeymooners, and the ladies in my group wished they had their husbands with them. Vlad the Impaler, more popularly known as Dracula, was born in this charming medieval town.

We went on the long scenic drive from Sighisoara to Suceava across mountains, rivers and forests carpeted with the soothing colors of autumn. On the way we saw horse-drawn carriages and huge bales of hay, images that have disappeared in Europe but remain alive in Romania.

Perfect harmony

The Bucovinian churches and monasteries are in perfect harmony with the surrounding landscape. Only here have I seen intricate frescoes painted inside and outside the walls, up to the steeple! The most interesting monasteries we saw were Voronet (1488) considered the "Sistine Chapel of the Orient," and Moldovita Monastery, a beautiful nunnery (whose nuns now own and operate the surrounding houses in the area).

We got the greatest surprise on our visit to Peles Castle, considered by many as one of the most beautiful castles in Europe, a masterpiece of European new-Renaissance architecture built by King Carol I from 1873 to 1883. The simplicity of its exterior is in contrast with its opulent display of elegant interiors and historical European art: Murano crystal chandeliers, German stained-glass windows, walls coverings of Cordoba leather, Meissen and Sevres porceleins, ebony and ivory sculptures.

Food was always served generously. Not to be missed are bors de pui cu smintina (soup with sour cream and chicken), sarmale in sauerkraut (leaves and meat with maize and potato mash on the side) and placinta cu brinza dulce (bread with cottage cheese and lemon). Yummy!

Beautiful scenery

Romania boasts not only of its beautiful scenery, monasteries and castles, but its famous people too, the likes of Johnny Weissmuler of "Tarzan" fame, world renowned gymnast Nadia Comaneci and film and theater actress Gina Patrichi.

When friends ask me what my favorite destinations are, I tell them they are the Holy Land, Russia, Spain, Turkey, and Egypt, in that order. Now, I have a new one topping my list . . . Romania!

(Those interested to join me from May 3 to 26, 2006 to Mejugorje, Romania, Poland, Czech and Austria, and from Oct. 16 to Nov. 7, 2006 to Turkey, Romania and the Holy Land may call 929-0144 or 929-0155, text 0917 814-8127, or email journeys@info.com.ph)

ONGLAO (extreme right) with Journeys of Faith group in front of Black Chruch of Brasov.

A Christmas poem

LOTUS POND

R. Valencia and S. Bismark

HERE IS A POEM WED like to share with everyone as a Christmas gift:

Jesus came to this planet 2,000 years ago
Up to this very day his influence continues to grow

He came to teach about his beloved Father
Who is the real source of all authority and power

Jesus taught that we should be humble and meek
Not Mammon, but spiritual wealth we should seek

He pointed to us what is real success
Spiritual development as actual progress

Jesus came to give us the greatest gift
Our degraded consciousness he sought to uplift

We are all children of the same Supreme Father
Be kind to all relatives; love your brother

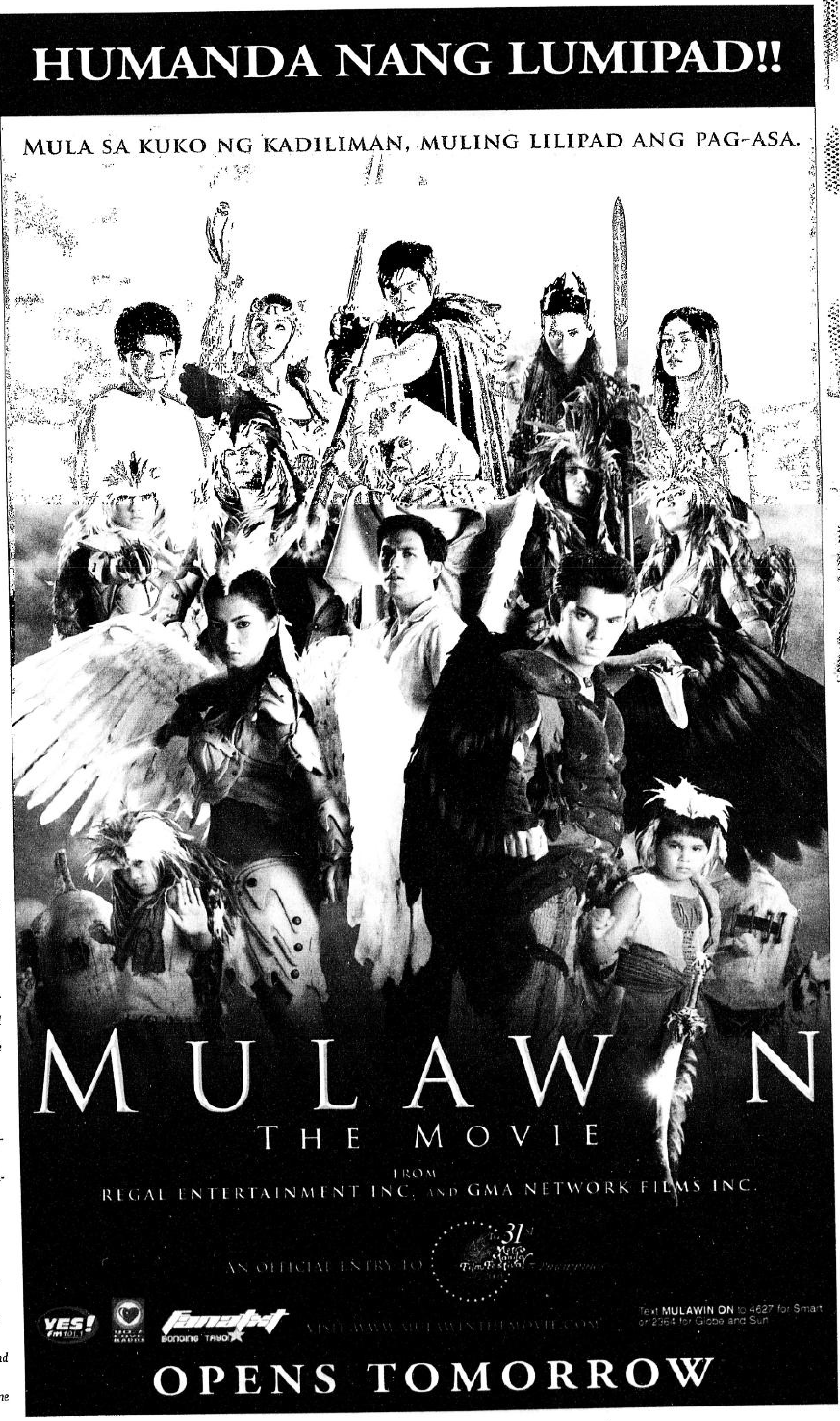
Jesus spoke the greatest wisdom
Taught us the way back to God's kingdom

Do not run away and live alone
Our Father is waiting for you to come home

Jesus wishes the best for you and me
He is kind and loving as a real friend can be

Thank Jesus for coming on Christmas day
May his teachings in our hearts blossom and stay

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory to the Supreme Father!


HUMANDA NANG LUMIPAD!!
MULA SA KUKO NG KADILIMAN, MULING LILIPAD ANG PAG-ASA.
MULAWIN
THE MOVIE
FROM
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OPENS TOMORROW

How the Metro filmfest has evolved through the years

By Nestor U. Torre

AFTER OUR PIECE on the Manila and Metro Manila Film Festivals came out last Saturday, some younger colleagues asked us: If the Manila filmfest started out with such lofty ideals *and* succeeded in its objectives, how come the Metro filmfest today is no longer mainly a showcase for quality productions?

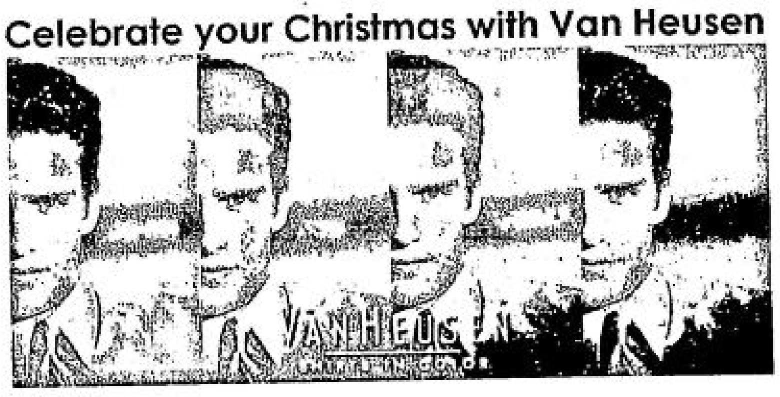
The answer to that thematic question has to be a complex one. The Manila festival, and later, the Metro filmfest, were doing well, but some movie industry leaders may have felt that they weren't making enough money. So, the festival date was moved to Christmastime.

This led to another adjustment:

HOW/ A2-3

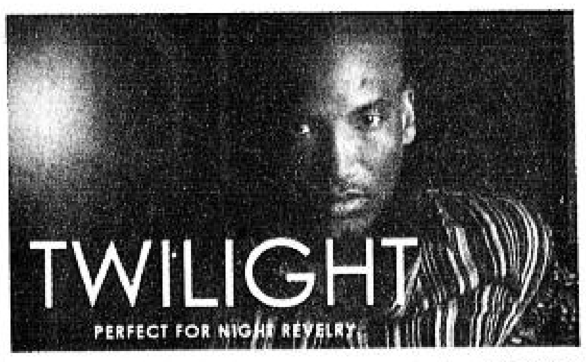
DENNIS Trillo stars in festival entry, "Blue Moon."

Celebrate your Christmas with Van Heusen



Van Heusen also introduces the latest innovation in dress shirt. The RUE-TECH shirts with non-iron technol gy. It has a revolutionary vapor hase technology with advanced micro- ibers combined with fabric engineer ng and a DP rating of 4 which gives you the 100% non-iron performance that is permanent. It also has a high level of moisture absorbency and breathability for the ultimate in comfort. Just wash, dry on a hanger and it's ready to wear. This high end shirt is priced at Php 1990

TRUE-TECH
An invention that makes all wrinkle-free shirts obsolete
VAN HEUSEN



Timeless elegance, colors checkered and stripes dominates this year's celebration of the holiday with Van Heusen. Classic, yes, but with a new way of thinking, men's favorite clothes are esigned along clean lines with surprising details and "urban" ensitivity. The palette of colors is coherent with the sophisticated and understated luxury which has always been Van Heusen's trademark. To complement the season, the latest offering from Van Heusen is a range of shirts in exciting colors - The ampaign, "SHIRTS FOR MEN" as the name suggest, showcases bold colors like Maroon, Pink, Orange, Yellow. This well-constructed and practical collection is inspired by the festive revelry of Christmas. This colorful range priced starting Php 990

LINEN
COOL, RELAXED STYLING...IDEAL FOR CASUAL GET-TOGETHER.

Also seen in Van Heusen stores is a great collection of linen shirts in pastel tones makes a classic statement. This collection of short shirts is best suited for hanging out with friends. Subtle embroidery detailing on the shirts is inspired from the classic Filipino Barong. Linen shirts are available at

No to miss "The Hot" collection for hristmas - The Twilight collection. This is a range of shirts in twilight hues of deep blue, maroon and blacks is a perfect offering for the man who wants to party hard this Christmas. With exciting detailing like Lurex threads and neon stripes, this collection of party shirts sets the mood for Christmas. Shirts in this collection start at Php 1290

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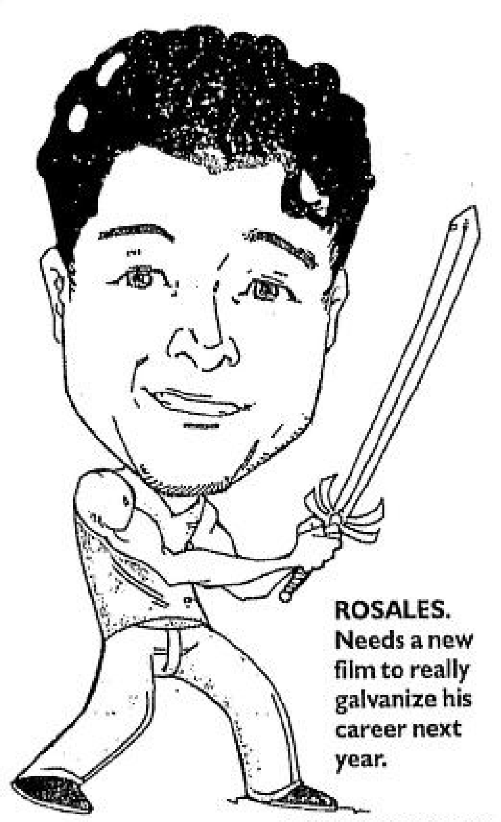
Editor Nestor U. Torre
Assistant Editor Rito P. Asilo

How young male comers fared in 2005



ROSALES. Needs a new film to really galvanize his career next year.

CARICATURE BY LA MISTADES

By Nestor U. Torre

LOCAL SHOW BUSINESS MAY BE IN THE doldrums these days, but young talents keep trying their luck and angling for stardom. Alas, the field is exceedingly crowded and competitive, so only a few new talents attain that elusive dream.

Even for stars, show biz careers are difficult to sustain. Success is the hard-won result of talent, charisma, versatility, clever career development, connections—and luck.

No guarantee

Thus, young stars may have already established themselves in the industry, but that's no guarantee that they're in the biz to stay.

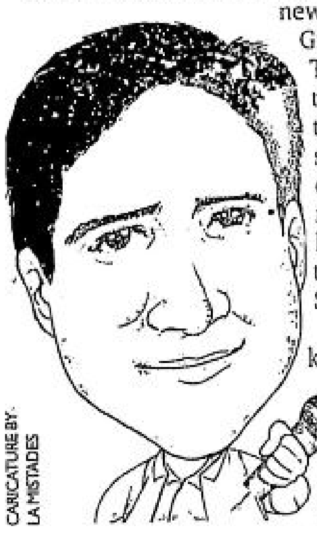
In 2005, for instance, young male stars' industry standing shifted in occasionally radical ways, drastically altering the composition of talents inhabiting that small and exclusive room at the top:

Richard Gutierrez remained a stellar comer, what with his TV shows ("Mulawin;" "Sugo," "Starstruck," etc.) and occasional movies.

Piolo Pascual wasn't so lucky, because his last film didn't do as well as expected So, he bade his time with TV shows and performances abroad.

Early next year, however, he's topbilling a new film, "Don't Give Up On Us." To make sure that it does better than his last starrer, Star Cinema is co-starring him with his old "*ka*-love team," Judy Ann Santos.

Even if fans know that there's nothing romantic going on between them, the fact that the two stars' previous movies were big hits provides the "insurance" that their new film will similarly do well at the box office.



CARICATURE BY LA MISTADES

PASCUAL. Teams up anew with Judy Ann Santos in "Don't Give Up On Us."

Marvin Agustin is another male star who's had his share of career problems, but it now coming back in a big way with the success of his TV movie, Marilou Diaz-Abaya's "Maging Akin Muli," and his new Metro filmfest movie, "Kutob."

Marvin does so well in "Maging Akin Muli" that he should be in the running for acting honors next year.

Jericho Rosales was cited for his performance in "Santa-Santita," but hasn't done as well since then. It's a good thing that the "Panday" telenovela came around, but Jericho needs a new film to really galvanize his career next year.

Eventful projects

Dingdong Dantes is doing well on TV, but his stellar career also needs more eventful projects to get him out of the plateau he's currently in.

A new addition to the list is Alfred Vargas, who is now very busy on television. Slowly but surely, he's proving that he has the talent and professionalism to stay long in the business. But, he should also be given a movie for his career to really break loose of TV's limitations.

Even newer is Sam Milby, who's going from "Pinoy Big Brother" to the movies next year. Let's hope that he has more going for him than his amiability and boy-next-door looks.

Finally, Mark Anthony Fernandez is on the comeback trail yet again, after his latest drug rehab. We trust that he's finally here to stay.

Celebrating Christmas with the stars

By Jocelyn Valle

MUHLACH. His farm is his refuge.

CHRISTMAS IS A thrill to the senses—the cool December breeze, the blinking multicolored lights, the uplifting carols, the irresistible food! The Yuletide season is the best time for hardworking stars to have fun and take a break. Where and how do they do it? Read on:

"My farm in Lipa has become a refuge for me and my family. We go there to unwind and celebrate special occasions, including Christmas—there's good food *pero kahit ano'ng handa, OK sa akin!* My mother-in-law always prepares stuffed turkey. I love Filipino dishes. *'Yung sabaw ng kare-kare na ilalagay mo sa rice! Tapos, balat ng lechon ang iku-kutsara mo! Hmm!"—Aga Muhlach*

Native delicacies

"I just stay home in Alabang and have *noche buena* with my family. My mother (Dulce Lukban) prepares traditional holiday dishes like ham, and native delicacies like *ube."—Pops Fernandez*

"For the last 10 years, I've been traveling abroad with my family on Dec. 25. *Dalawang beses kaming nakakapag*-celebrate ng Christmas because of the different time zones! Like last year *sa* Las Vegas, it was still Dec. 25 *pag-dating namin doon. Ang* flight attendants, *naka*-costume ng Santa Claus. *'Yun nga lang,* air line food *ang noche buena!" —Joey de Leon*

"On Dec. 24 at dinnertime, Zoren and I and our twins, Maverick and Cassandra, go to his

CELEBRATING/ A3-2

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movietime SCHEDULE AND EVENTS

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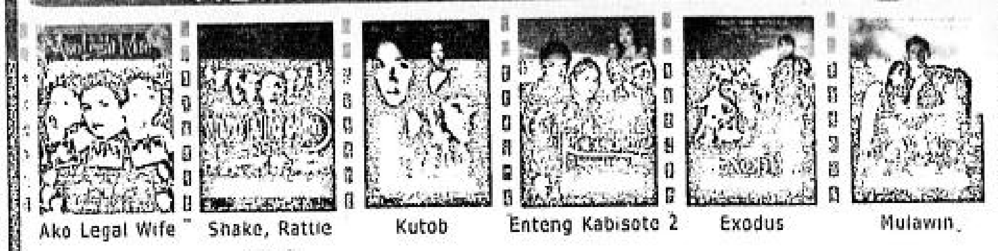

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THE PODIUM 633-8976
1 KING KONG 01:10FS/01:40MF 04:50LFS/05:20LMF/08:30END
2 KING KONG 12:15FS/12:40MF 03:50LFS/04:20LMF/07:30END

MEGAMALL
1 KING KONG 11:30FS/12:00MF 03:10LFS/03:40LMF/06:50END

CEBU (032) 231-3870
1 KING KONG 01:20FS/01:40MF 04:50LFS/05:05LMF/08:15END
2 KING KONG 11:00FS/11:15MF 02:23LFS/02:40LMF/05:55END
3 KING KONG 10:35FS/10:45MF 01:53LFS/02:10LMF/05:20END

MANILA
6 KING KONG 11:30MF/02:55/06:20 09:20LFS/09:45LMF/12:45END

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 KING KONG
2 MERRY CHRISTMAS
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 KING KONG
7 KING KONG
8 FAMILY STONE
9 THE FOG
10 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
11 THE MAN
12 KING KONG

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 KING KONG
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXERS
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 MERRY CHRISTMAS
8 CHICKEN LITTLE
9 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
10 THE FOG

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 KING KONG
2 FAMILY TONE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 KING KONG

SM VALENZUELA NOW OPEN
1 KING KONG
2 FAMILY STONE
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 FAMILY STONE
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 HARI NG SABLAY
6 THE FOG
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG
9 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
10 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
11 CHICKEN LITTLE
12 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 KING KONG
2 FAMILY STONE
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
6 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
7 THE MAN
8 THE FOG
9 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
10 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 FAMILY STONE
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 KING KONG
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXERS
3 FAMILY STONE
4 MERRY CHRISTMAS
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 THE FOG
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG

SM CITY MANILA
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 FAMILY STONE
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 KING KONG
7 KING KONG
8 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
9 THE MYTH
10 IN HER SHOES
11 THE FOG
12 THE MAN

SM SAN LAZARO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE
5 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
6 THE FOG

LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 HARI NG SABLAY
5 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
6 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 KING KONG
2 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG

SM MOLINO NOW OPEN
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE FOG
4 FAMILY STONE

SM CITY BACOOR
1 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
2 THE FOG
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 FAMILY STONE
8 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM CITY MARILAO
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 KING KONG

SM CITY DASMARIÑAS
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG

SM CITY LUCENA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 THE MYTH

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
5 THE FOG
6 THE MYTH
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG

SM CITY ILOILO
1 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
2 RESERVED
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 THE FOG
7 RESERVED
8 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS

SM CITY DAVAO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 THE FOG
5 KING KONG
6 KING KONG

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE MYTH
4 KING KONG

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CHICKEN LITTLE GP 1:00,3:00,5:00,7:00,9:00	KING KONG PG13 2:25,5:55,9:25	FAMILY STONE PG13 12:30,2:55,5:20, 7:45,10:10
KING KONG PG13 1:00,4:30,8:00	KING KONG PG13 12:20,3:50,7:20	KING KONG PG13 3:10,6:40,10:10

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① KING KONG MTRCB: PG-13 12:30, 4:15, LMF
② KING KONG MTRCB: PG-13 1:30, 5:15, LMF
③ FAMILY STONE MTRCB: PG-13 11:30, 2:00, 4:30, 7:00 LMF
④ KING KONG MTRBC.PG-13 10:45, 2:30, 6:15 LMF
PREMIERE THEATRE KING KONG
MTRCB : PG-13 2:00, 5:45, LMF
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3 FAMILY STONE PG13 10:45, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
4 KING KONG PG13 10:50, 2:30, 6:10, 9:50
5 KING KONG PG13 11:25, 3:05, 6:45, 10:25
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January 27, 2005 JED MADELA 9PM
February 3 & 4 NINA&NYOY 9PM
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Araneta Center Leisure Guide

Santa Claus Meet & Greet
Today and Tomorrow
3:00 - 4:30 pm Ali Mall Exchange Lobby
4:30 - 6:00 pm Ali Mall Lower Ground Floor
3:00 - 6:00 pm Farmers Plaza

CINEMA SCHEDULES
Gateway CINEPLEX*10 LEVEL 4, GATEWAY MALL
ONLY P99 ADMISSION
P120 RESERVED SEATS
P150 KING KONG
GLOBE PLATINUM P249 / P299
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX
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KING KONG 12:35 / 2:25 / 3:00 / 3:35 / 4:10 6:00 / 6:35 / 7:10 / 7:45 / 9:35
GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA KING KONG 1:50 / 5:25 / 9:00
FAMILY STONE 1:30 / 4:10 / 6:50 / 9:30
JUST LIKE HEAVEN 12:30 / 2:40 / 4:50
CHICKEN LITTLE 12:30 / 2:30 / 4:30 / 6:30 / 8:30
THE FOG 12:20 / 2:30 / 4:40
...MAXIMO OLIVEROS 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30
MERRY CHRISTMAS 7:00 / 9:30
IN HER SHOES 6:50 / 9:40

ALI MALL CINEMAS
❶ KING KONG 12:50 / 4:25 / 8:00
❷ HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET 12:00 R4 / 2:00 / 5:00 / 8:00
❸ IN HER SHOES 12:30 / 3:10 / 5:50 / 8:30
❹ BEAUTIFUL BOXER 12:10 / 2:50 / 5:30 / 8:10
❺ THE MYTH 12:45 / 3:15 / 5:45 / 8:20
DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

ARANETA COLISEUM EVENTS
SPELLBOUND MAGIC SHOW Opens December 25
BACKSTREET BOYS - NEVER GONE TOUR January 20, Friday 8 pm

CENTER EVENTS
SALE *Araneta Center Year-End Centerwide Sale* from Dec. 26, 2005 to Jan. 1, 2006. Up to 50% off on great selections at Gateway Mall, Farmers Plaza & Ali Mall. Extended mall hours of 10am to 10pm except Dec. 31 & Jan. 1
BAZAAR *Absolutely Christmas Holiday Bazaar* ongoing until January 6 at the Ali Mall Exchange on the Ground Floor of Ali Mall

LOG ON TO www.aranetacenter.net FOR MORE DETAILS OR TO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR WEEKLY E-MAIL ENTERTAINMENT UPDATES

Christmas gifts for my friends

(Conclusion)

By Behn Cervantes

MONTANO. A role to propel him to international prominence.

I WOULD LOVE TO give Elwood Perez a movie script that would showcase his campy sense of humor and off-key sense of the absurd.

I wish Cesar Montano would find the Hollywood role to propel him to international prominence. He is professional enough to realize that he has to work on himself to make a mark in the global market.

Filipino musical

I'd like to give Lea Salonga the script of a Filipino musical, so that our foremost international talent could finally play a Filipino! The renowned Ms Salonga has played a Vietnamese (twice—in "Miss Saigon" and in Hallmark's TV movie, "Redwood Curtain"), Chinese ("Flower Drum Song"), and sang for Disney as an Arabian girl ("Aladdin") and a Chinese female warrior ("Mulan"). But, Lea has yet to portray a Filipina in a local musical.

While we're on the topic of scripts, I wish I could also gift Nora Aunor with an appropriate script that would make her a focal point of local cinema again.

La Aunor can only have improved with time, age and experience. The proper script directed by an understanding woman like Laurice Guillen would put the Superstar back where she rightfully belongs. Also, let us pray that she has learned her lessons well.

I wish I could find a book that would teach many of our Congressmen how to speak English properly. Listening to congressional hearings always astounds me. With awful role models, it's no wonder why the youth today hardly speak English.

Peace of mind

I wish I could give President Gloria (Macapagal Arroyo) peace of mind, and ample respite from neverending senate and congressional hearings and scandals, so she can attend to the affairs of this troubled state! And I wish she would find support from both government and the private sector.

Then, I can without hesitation declare to one and all: Peace on Earth to men of goodwill!

VILLAROEL. *Noche Buena* with family.

Celebrating

From page A3-1

mother's house. For *noche buena*, we go to my dad's place to celebrate with my family. *Iba't-iba ang handa, pero s'yempre, nand'yan ang* ham, chicken lollipop, barbecue, pasta or *pancit*. Chicken turbo *ang* specialty *ng* Daddy *ko*."—*Carmina Villaroel*

"More than the food, it's the people you're with who make Yuletide gatherings special. I used to spend the holidays in a hotel where I worked—but after that lonely experience, I promised myself to spend them with people close to my heart."—*Dominic Ochoa*

Filmfest entry

"This is probably the best Christmas for me! My dad will be coming home after 10 years in jail—and I'm now a father of twin boys, Santiago and Sebastian. I'll spend *noche buena* with my family. I don't mind mixing sushi with *bibingka* and *puto-bumbong*. Just like the past two years, I'll watch my filmfest entry, 'Kutob,' on opening day."—*Marvin Agustin*

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GALLERIA 632-9118

1 KING KONG • THX
1:40 5:20 9:00

2 BEAUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

3 KING KONG
2:10 5:50

4 KING KONG
12:40 4:20 8:00

5 KING KONG
11:00 2:40 6:20 10:00

6 KING KONG
4:50 8:30

7 IN HER SHOES
1:35 4:20 7:05 9:50

8 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

9 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50

10 KISNA 12:40 3:50
BARSAAT 7:05 9:50

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 KING KONG 1:50 5:20 8:50

2 BEAUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 9:50

3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00

4 KING KONG
11:20 2:50 6:20 9:50

5 KING KONG
11:20 2:50 6:20 9:50

6 KING KONG
12:20 3:50 7:20

7 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

METRO EAST 682-8193 / 682-8199

1 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
12:00 3:00 6:00 9:00

2 KING KONG
10:25 2:10 5:50 9:40

3 KING KONG
2:10 5:55 9:40

4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

5 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
1:00 3:40 6:20 9:00

6 KING KONG
5:15 9:00

7 KING KONG
5:15 9:00

8 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
1:40 4:00 6:20 9:00

NOVALICHES [illegible]

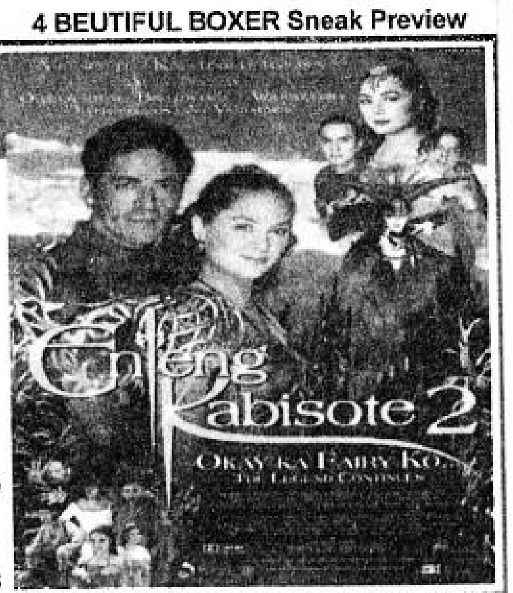
1 BEAUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview
2 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 THE FOG
6 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2576

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
4 BEUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview



upclose and personal

with the cast of Enteng Kabisote 2

Vic Sotto • Kristine Hermosa • Oyo Boy
Bing Loyzaga • Aiza Seguerra

DECEMBER 27 (Tuesday)
Cinema Lobby

Ermita - *1:00PM* **Metro East** - *3:00PM*
Galleria - *5:00PM*

Regular Showing: December 25

STA ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 KING KONG
2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
3 IN HER SHOES
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
5 KING KONG

LIPA (043) 757-3664 / (043) 312-5870

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET OF FIRE
4 THE FOG

DASMARINAS (046) 852-2125 / (046) 416-4132

1 KING KONG
2 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 KING KONG
4 THE FOG

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 KING KONG
2 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG

IMUS (046) 875-3838 / (046) 471-6188

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 IN HER SHOES
4 THE FOG

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 / (045) 961-6270

1 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 KING KONG

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 / (034) 441-0459

1 KING KONG
2 THE FOG
3 KING KONG
4 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
5 CHICKEN LITTLE
6 THE MYTH

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 KING KONG
2 THE FOG
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 THE MYTH
5 KING KONG

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At the Activity Center

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Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra Christmas Shows December 23 - 25, 30, 2005 **Christmas Fireworks Display** December 16 - 18, 23, 25, 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM	**Acoustic Christmas Serenade feat. Chedi** December 23, 2005 - 6 PM **Blims / Automatic Center Exhibit** Dec. 19 to 31, 2005	**2005 Novellino - Manila Philharmonic Orchestra Concert Tour** December 21, 2005

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Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra Christmas Shows
December 23 - 25, 30, 2005
Christmas Fireworks Display
December 23, 25, 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM

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AYALA CINEMAS

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Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729 7777

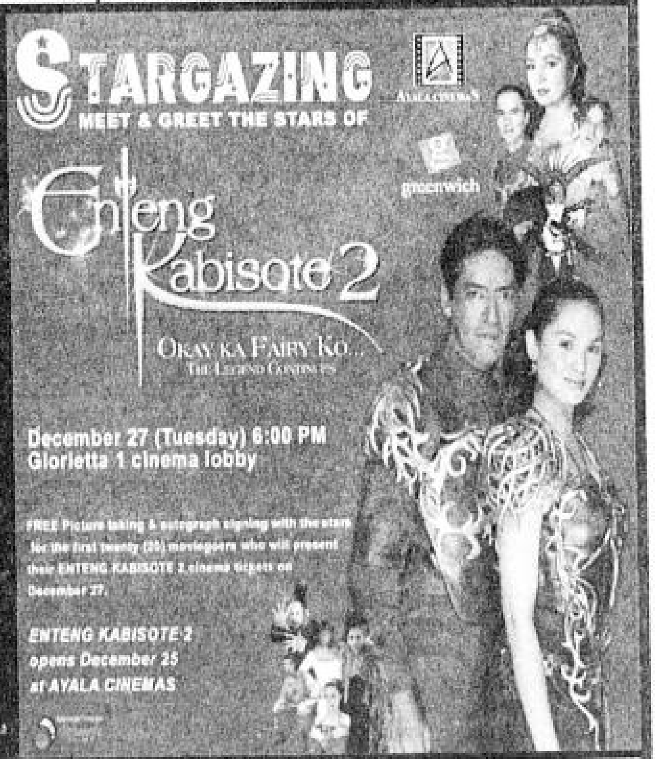
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
G1	GLORIETTA 1	THE FAMILY STONE	KINGKONG	KINGKONG	AN UNFINISHED LIFE			
G4	GLORIETTA 4	KINGKONG	KINGKONG	THX KINGKONG 1:55, 5:35, 9:15 GUARANTEED SEATS	KISS KISS BANG BANG	CHICKEN LITTLE	KINGKONG	IN HER SHOES
GB1	GREENBELT 1	THE FAMILY STONE 12:55, 3:20, 5:45, 8:10	KINGKONG 1:40, 5:20, 9:00					
GB3	GREENBELT 3	THX KINGKONG 1:00, 4:45, 8:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	THX KINGKONG 2:00, 5:45, 9:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	JUST LIKE HEAVEN 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	THE FAMILY STONE 1:40, 4:05, 6:30, 8:55, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	KINGKONG 3:00, 6:45, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	THX KINGKONG	THE FAMILY STONE	BEAUTIFUL BOXER	KINGKONG	KINGKONG		
ACC	AYALA CENTER CEBU	KINGKONG	KINGKONG	KINGKONG	JUST LIKE HEAVEN			

STARGAZING
Meet & Greet the stars of KUTOB

December 26 (Monday)
6:00 PM
Glorietta 1 Cinema Lobby

FREE Picture taking & autograph signing with the stars for the first twenty (20) moviegoers who will present their KUTOB movietickets on December 26

KUTOB opens December 25 at Ayala Cinemas



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MEET & GREET THE STARS OF Enteng Kabisote 2
OKAY KA FAIRY KO... THE LEGEND CONTINUES

December 27 (Tuesday) 6:00 PM
Glorietta 1 cinema lobby

FREE Picture taking & autograph signing with the stars for the first twenty (20) moviegoers who will present their ENTENG KABISOTE 2 cinema tickets on December 27.

ENTENG KABISOTE 2 opens December 25 at AYALA CINEMAS

Customer Service text hotline:	0917 6095900
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Alabang Town Center -	842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
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② Beautiful Boxer
③ King Kong
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1. Promo period is from Dec. 9 to 31, 2005.
2. For every P500 single or accumulated receipt purchase dated on the same day in any regular retail store, food choices, and Metro Department Store and Supermarket, shoppers will get 1 Christmas Shopping Bag.
3. A maximum of 4 shopping bags will be given to shoppers presenting single or accumulated receipts amounting to P2001 and over.
4. Shoppers will present their receipt to the Customer Service booth to redeem their Market! Market! shopping bag.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-580, Series of 2005

Powerful performances in 'Kaleldo'

By Rito P. Asilo

IN "KALELDO" ("SUMMER HEAT" IN Kapampangan), director Brillante Mendoza proves that the innovative storytelling style and technical savvy he displayed in "Masahista," winner of Locarno filmfest's Golden Leopard trophy in Switzerland (widely regarded as the fourth biggest film festival in Europe after Cannes, Berlin and Venice), was no fluke.

"Kaleldo" was, in fact, recently graded B by the Cinema Evaluation Board, and is scheduled for commercial release in February.

PICACHE. Doesn't devolve into caricature.

Risqué

Less raunchy but no less diverting as his risqué cinematic debut, Mendoza's new film once again examines social mores and local traditions, and utilizes these elements to explore the relationships that bind a domineering father (Johnny Delgado), his three daughters—the responsible butch lesbian, Jess (Cherry Pie Picache), the carefree newlywed Grace (Juliana Palermo) and the headstrong Lourdes (Angel Aquino)—and the people in their lives.

Each of these characters has engaging, familiar stories to tell: From the father's obvious aversion to Jess' sexual preference and alternative lifestyle and the marital and financial woes of Lourdes, and from Grace's strained relationship with her in-laws to the patriarch's domineering albeit suffocating demeanor.

Mendoza's depiction of his characters' motivations, and his use of allusions and the changing of the seasons to clue viewers in on the smoldering dynamics of the extended *Pinoy* family are fresh, inventive and unpretentious. He rips the veneer off the seemingly close-knit, genteel Filipino domestic household with dead-on pertinence.

Local color

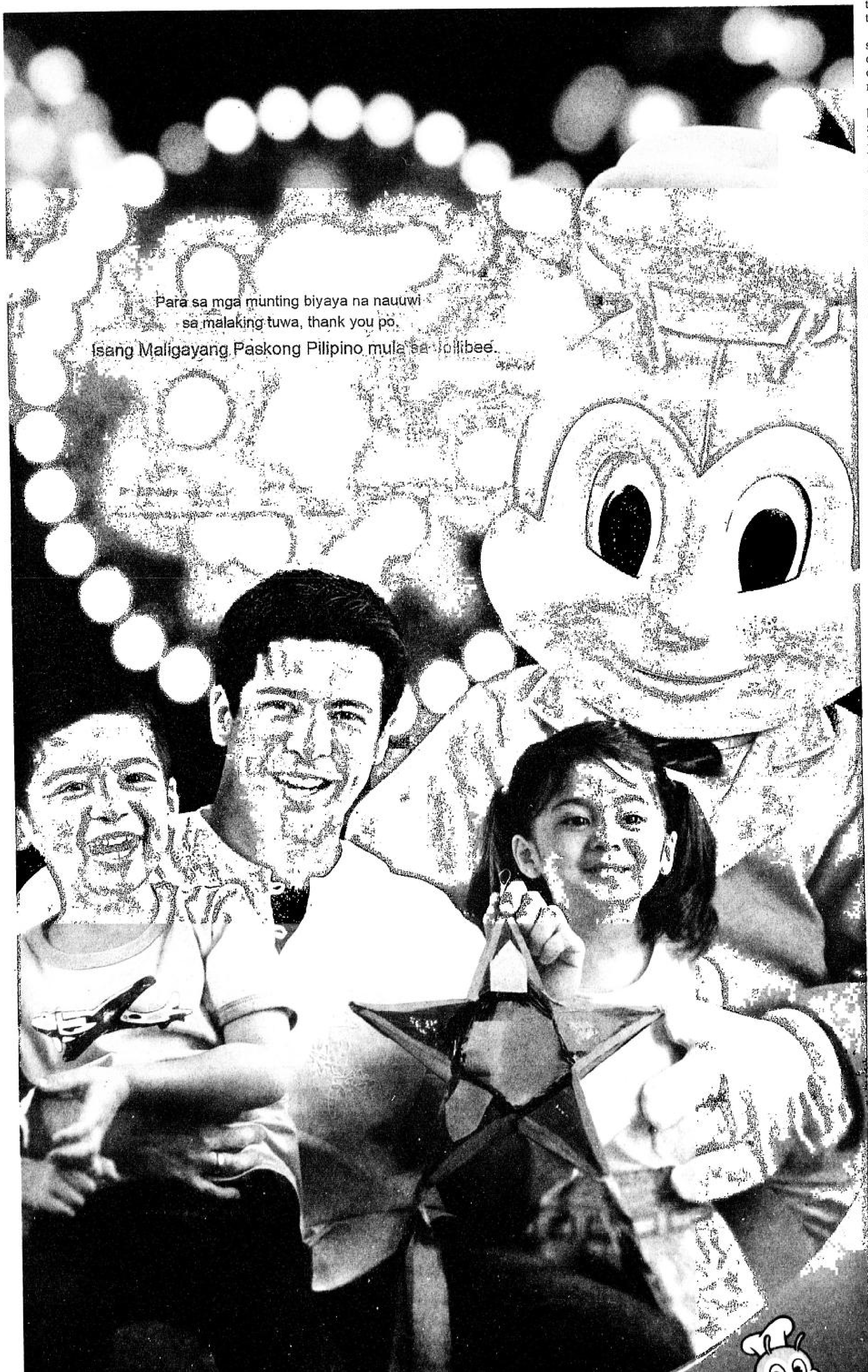
The movie occasionally wavers into narrative twaddle (What drives the overbearing father? What severs Jess' relationship with her paramour?), and totters when it tries to make light of heavy scenes with comic banter that doesn't quite work. All in all, however, its story simmers with conflict, tension and local color.

"Kaleldo" is further elevated by the empathetic performances of its cast, paced by the magnificent Cherry Pie Picache. Aquino, Delgado, Palermo, Novero and the rest of the ensemble do well in their respective roles, but Picache almost runs away with the film with her portrayal of the silently suffering and aggrieved lesbian daughter.

Pain and desperation

She conveys the pain and desperation of her character with aplomb. And she doesn't resort to "tomboy" posturing, or devolve into caricature—her tough, sturdy façade can't hide the big heart that she wears on her sleeve.

In the film's final frame, Picache gazes into the horizon as she contemplates the joys and heartbreaks that have molded her character. Then, she smiles wanly *but* hopefully—and we smile along with her.


Para sa mga munting biyaya na nauuwi
sa malaking tuwa, thank you po.
Isang Maligayang Paskong Pilipino mula sa Jollibee.
Dito sa Jollibee, bida ang saya!

Nostalgia is big (show) business

By Nestor U. Torre

DON'T LOOK NOW, BUT THE ENTERTAINMENT audience's penchant for nostalgia has spawned a major moneymaking industry in the biz.

Retired performers are being dusted off for yet another tour of countries and towns where their similarly elderly fans still want to be reminded of the good, old days—by the now oldies but goodies who first made them trip the light fan-tastic many decades ago!

Veterans

This year, Filipino music fans were visited by Engelbert Humperdinck and The Lettermen. Early next year, The Freshmen will launch the next wave of visiting veterans from the music front.

While old performers generally attract old audiences, it's instructive to note that there are quite a number of younger people who attend their concerts—and they also look like they're having a whale of a good time!

There must be something in those "old standards" that the veteran performers trot out for one final spin around the park that crosses the generational divide, and touches a musical nerve in most everyone.

Nostalgia has become such big (show) business in the United States that even *dead* singing stars are still making a lot of money! Elvis Presley leads the posthumous cavalcade, with his estate making millions annually, long after the king has left the building . . .

Locally, senior singers like Basil Valdez and Rico J. Puno still command SRO audiences. And Rico J. has a prosperous sideline performing in the States with the durable likes of Marco Sison, Rey Valera and Hajji Alejandro.

Old sitcoms

In the States, the nostalgia wave has lapped the shores of TV land, as well, with old sitcoms like "Bewitched" being made into movies, and "Seinfeld" making more millions for its already stunningly wealthy star-producer, in its umpteenth reissue on television, and on VCD.

It hasn't happened in the Philippines yet, but we hope some canny producers will test the water here and come up with a box set of discs of "An Evening with Pilita" or "The Nida-Nestor Show"—*if* their videotapes are still extant and serviceable.

And, what about the movies? In the States, many classic films have been reissued on video, to the delight of new generations of film buffs. They're ecstatic because they can now savor the best movies of a cinematic age far better than the present.

Acclaimed productions

Locally, old movies are seen mostly on television, but we hear that some film studios are experimenting with box sets of some of their most acclaimed productions.

If they click, we could be in for even more compilations, like the best films of Lino Brocka, the best screen performances of Nora Aunor, and the first movies of child stars like Vilma Santos, Niño Muhlach and Aiza Seguerra.

—Nostalgia in full bloom!

Distinctive sounds in 'Anti-Idol'

By Noelani Torre

FANS OF "AMERICAN IDOL" AND "POP IDOL" may resent the title of Universal Music's latest compilation, but there's no denying that "Anti-Idol: Real Music For Real People" is indeed, well, "anti-idol." Or at least, it features artists whom you'd be hard put to imagine in an "Idol" singing contest.

First on the playlist is U2's hit song, "Vertigo," from their 11th album, "How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb." Recently inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the band may not be "American" or "Pop" idols, but they've enjoyed their share of idolatry for the better part of two decades.

Iconic

Another long-lived and iconic group featured in the album is The Cure. Dubbed "England's most legendary alternative band" by Rolling Stone, they provide this compilation's album-ender in the fitting form of the effervescent "The End of the World."

And, as long as we're talking about icons, we might as well mention the presence of the Queens of the Stone Age, Ian Brown, P.J. Harvey, and Björk.

QOTSA is represented by "Go With the Flow." The band itself is less than a decade old, but its members (except for the guitarist/keyboardist) used to make up Kyuss, a '90s stoner rock cult favorite.

Also born of another admired group is Ian Brown, former frontman and singer of the Stone Roses. His contribution to this collection is "Keep What Ya Got."

Female contingent

P.J. Harvey and Björk are the sole representatives of the female contingent in "Anti-Idol," if you don't count the gender-blurring Scissor Sisters, but they certainly hold their own!

Equally distinctive is the label-defying Björk, whose "Oceania," from her newest album, "Medúlla," is featured in this collection.

BUSINESS

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Editor Raul O. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma

WHAT'S INSIDE

SMC studies Del Monte deal /B3

Agri sector to sustain growth in '06 /B8

Japan OKs ₱1.2-B aid to ARMM projects

Gov't promises counterpart funding

By Michelle V. Remo

THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT HAS ALLOCATED 2.47 BILLION yen (about P1.2 billion) to jumpstart economic development projects in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) next year, a move aimed at promoting peace and stability in the South.

The official development assistance, to be given through the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), was to fulfill a commitment made by Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to President Macapagal-Arroyo during her state visit to Japan in December 2002.

JBIC is the Philippines' biggest source of ODA.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said the "ARMM Social Fund for Peace and Development Project" has three components. The first is the Community Development Assistance (CDA), which will cover the establishment of small-scale infrastructure such as water service, enhancement of health and education services, and development of post-harvest facilities for more than 200 barangays in ARMM.

The second component is the Strategic Regional Infrastructure (SRI), which will include the putting up of an inter-regional infrastructure, establishment of a vocational training center, construction of a hospital, and improvement of roads. The third component, the Institutional Strengthening and Development (ISD), covers auxiliary programs to facilitate procurement and provide support for the smooth implementation of the project.

JBIC country chief representative Osamu Murata said the project would need the cooperation among people's organizations as well as local government units. He added that consultants would be tapped to provide on-the-job training for ARMM government employees on project management.

Murata said the Japanese Official Development Assistance Charter, which was revised in August 2003, has adopted the objective of establishing peace and fostering nation-building.

"Mindanao still has conflict problems, but with the full-scale implementation of this project starting next year, it is expected that support of Japan will penetrate the barangay level, and such assistance for sustainable development will contribute to peace-building in the area," he said.

The government has already given the commitment to provide the necessary counterpart funding to push the project through, the Neda said in a statement. The Neda noted that peace and development in conflict areas such as the ARMM was a priority of the Arroyo administration.

Iran firm spending $100M to restart RP petrochem plant

By Abigail L. Ho

NPC ALLIANCE CORP., A UNIT of Iran's National Petrochemical Co., will invest $100 million to re-commission the mothballed Bataan polyethylene plant in Mariveles.

Iran's NPC International earlier bought 60 percent of NPC Alliance from Metro Alliance Holdings and Equities Corp. (Mahec), a company majority owned by plastics king William Gatchalian.

Earlier this year, Mahec and Singapore firm Pan Pacific Capital Advisors Pte Ltd. signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to jointly undertake the re-commissioning of the Bataan polyethylene plant.

The MOU contains the basic terms of reference governing the funding of the re-commissioning of the $350-million Mahec-owned petrochemical facility.

Following the signing, Mahec said the initial funding from the partnership would cover not only the cost of re-commissioning the plant but would also finance the purchase of start-up feedstock to prepare the facility for operations.

Mahec, however, eventually sold majority of its shares in the plant to Iran's NPC International.

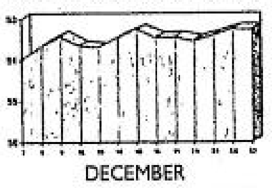
In a related development, the Board of Investments has approved the transfer of all the pioneer incentives earlier granted to BPC to its new owners.

Since the plant closed only a

IRAN/ B3

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



DECEMBER

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 53.27 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 23, 2005

¥ 117.50 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 22, 2005

GOLD: $504.50-505.00
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 23, 2005

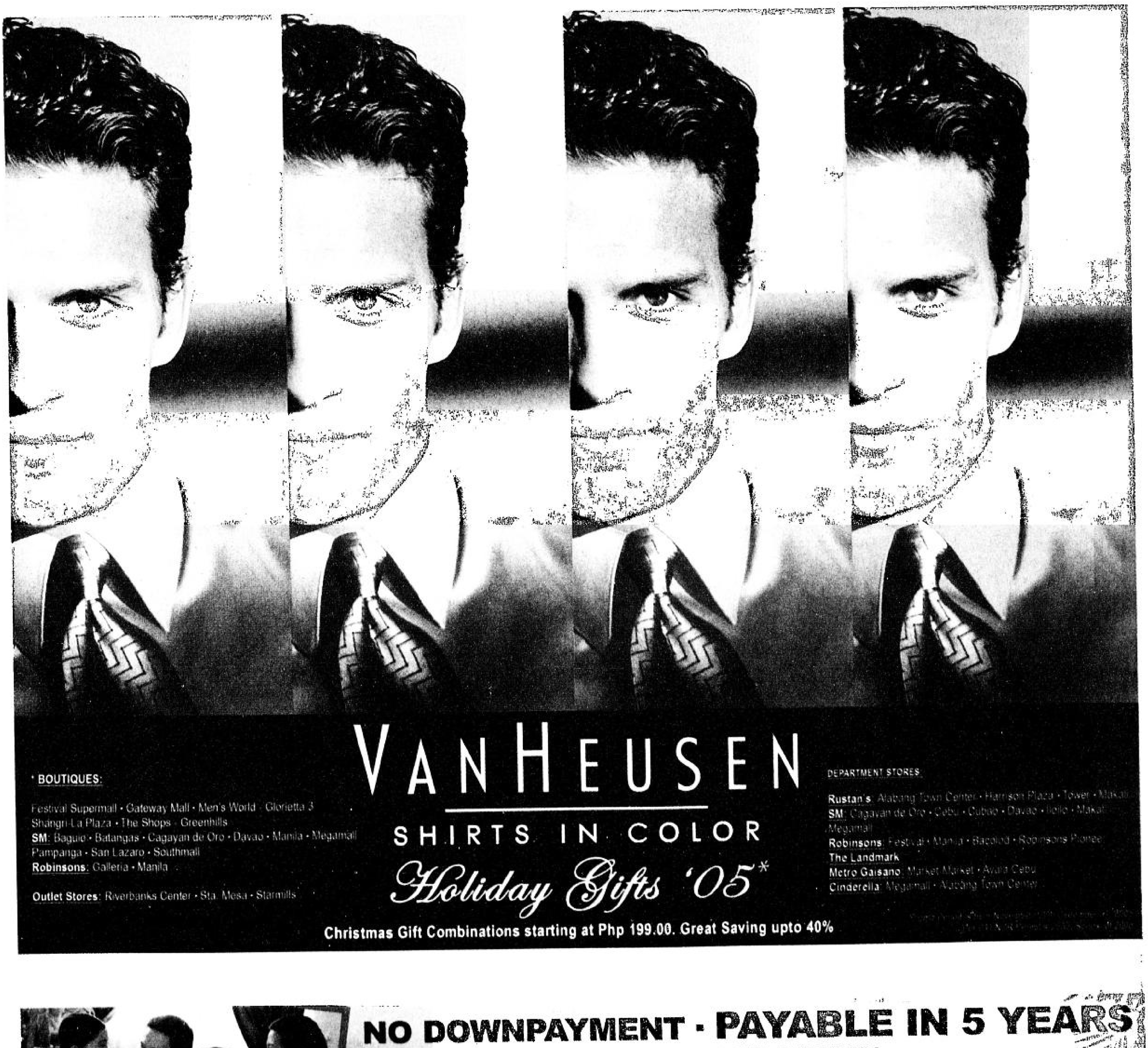
Shares close 1.58% higher

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 1.58 percent higher yesterday, finishing the week on a strong note as investors bought into stocks expected to do well next year, dealers said.

However, turnover was lighter than usual with many market players already out of the market for the Christmas holidays, they added.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose 32.88 points to a two-week

SHARES/ B3



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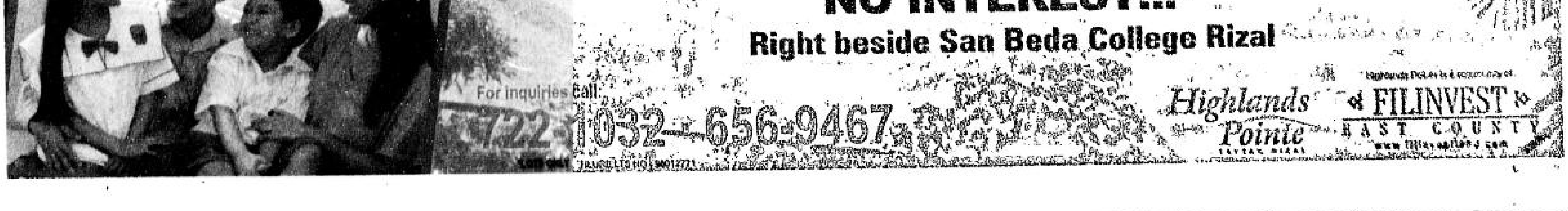

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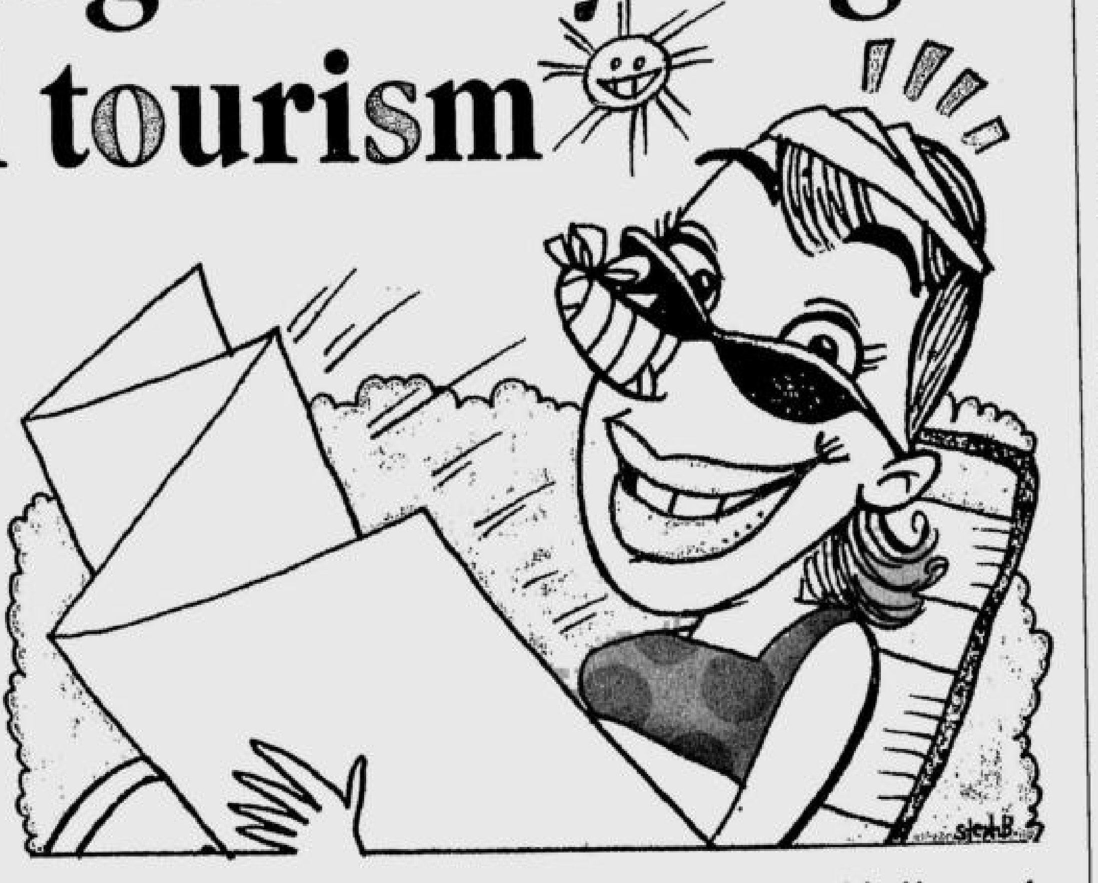
Local surgeons eyeing medical tourism

By Charles E. Buban



ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEPH BRAVO

SUN, SEA, SAND and surgery. These could be the country's key to solving the continuing exodus of Filipino health care professionals seeking better-paying jobs abroad, according to a group of plastic surgeons bent on promoting the Philippines as Southeast Asia's next "medical tourism" destination.

Medical tourism refers to people visiting another country with the dual purpose of getting medical treatment while enjoying a vacation in the process. People at times choose to undergo treatment abroad because the procedure is very expensive or is not available in their home country.

Revenue earner

Plastic surgeon Joseph James Joaquino said medical tourism "promises to be a prestigious and lucrative revenue earner for the Philippines, with synergistic effects of boosting not only the medical and healthcare industries, but also the tourism industry."

He cited Thailand as example where the industry has attracted 600,000 foreign patients in 2004 and generated around $488 million revenue for the country. Thailand expects its medical tourism to grow by 66 percent next year.

Joaquino said Thailand is just one of several countries in the region cashing in on its ability to use cheap but highly skilled labor and offer affordable hospital accommodation and specialty treatments.

"If we could only entice even a portion of this market, then our doctors and nurses will no longer have to go elsewhere," said Joaquino.

Surgery center

Early this year, Joaquino and Dr. Romeo Vergara founded New Life Center, a private esthetic and plastic surgery center, bringing together the country's experts in the field of plastic surgery.

The center specializes in plastic, cosmetic and reconstructive surgery, which refers to a variety of operations to repair or restore body parts or to change a body part so it would look better.

Vergara said that for years, plastic surgeons have been successfully practicing their profession individually, even catering to a few foreign clients.

"Foreign patients are drawn to the Philippines because we offer a significant cost advantage over the United States and Europe," Vergara said.

Americans make up most of their foreign clientele.

Vergara said this is not surprising considering that a lot of the facilities in the country are patterned after American models and many of the country's health care professionals trained in the States.

Tourist attractions

Joaquino said patients also come to the Philippines because there are many tourist attractions they can go to.

"They fly in, recuperate around the pool or beach, and fly out again without anyone noticing they've been under the knife," he said.

Because medical tourism is not yet an organized industry in the Philippines, New Life Center (located at Borough Medical Center in Eastwood City, Libis) for now is taking care of hotel accommodation and tour arrangement as well as other needs of its foreign clients.

Christmas puzzles

EUREKA!

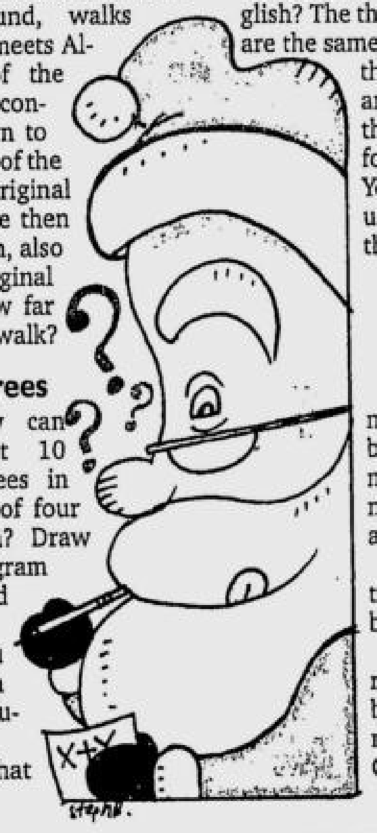
Queena N. Lee-Chua

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR again, and this time the puzzles are classic ones. None of them require advanced math (arithmetic and common sense will do), but you probably need a pen and paper.

The first 10 readers to send ALL correct solutions will receive a copy of my recent book "Arithmetricks and Other Mathematical Secrets Revealed" (published by Anvil). Remember to send complete solutions (or explanations), not just the final answers.

Happy solving!

1. Ben walks up and down a small mountain, and the entire round trip is six kilometers. His girlfriend Alice walks at half Ben's speed. When Ben reaches the top of the mountain, he turns around, walks back, and meets Alice part of the way. Ben continues down to the bottom of the hill at his original speed. Alice then follows him, also at her original speed. How far does Alice walk?



Mango trees

2. How can you plant 10 mango trees in five rows of four trees each? Draw your diagram clearly, and explain how you hit upon your solution.

3. What digit does each letter represent? A given letter always represents the same digit. The equation is:

The number ABCDE multiplied by 4 is equal to the number EDCBA.

What digit does A represent? How about B? C? D? E? You can of course solve this by trial and error, but I require you to explain logically the details of your solution.

4. How good are you in English? The three letters missing are the same for every line (although the letters are jumbled). Fill in the blanks to make four English words. You may want to use a dictionary for this.

1st word: _P__
2nd word: P___
3rd word: __P_
4th word: ___P

5. My maker does not want me. My buyer does not use me. My user does not see me. What am I?

E-mail your solutions to blessbook@yahoo.com.

Winners and correct solutions will be announced in mid-January. Merry Christmas!

Colors of joy

DISCOVER

Massie Santos Ballon

THIS YEAR'S CHRISTMAS COLUMN IS based on a story from last month's issue of Popular Science. It is about a man who wanted to bring happiness to kids everywhere and of the unlikely allies he met along who helped him achieve his goal.

In the mid-1990s a web designer and toy inventor named Tim Kehoe asked a very simple question: how can people have fun? After creating several unsuccessful games, he hit upon an equally simple answer: colored bubbles.

Bubbles imply cheer by their very name. Champagne bubbling over the top of the bottle makes an appearance at celebrations like weddings and New Year's Eve. A person with a bubbly personality is often described as upbeat and cheerful.

Kehoe theorized that if clear bubbles were so much fun, colored bubbles would be even better. So he set about trying to make it a reality, but he quickly realized that making a colored bubble isn't as easy as it sounds.

Surface tension

Bubbles are created when the surface tension of water is lowered enough that air can come in and create walls of surface molecules, shaping the water into a perfect sphere. Unfortunately, the surface tension of water is high enough that the bubbles usually burst before you can blink.

Adding soap to the water, however, reduces the latter's surface tension enough that the bubbles last long enough to be seen and admired. These same walls that shape the bubble, however, can also prevent anything from sticking to it.

Kehoe tried mixing several types of dyes into the bubble mixture, but the dyes either slid off the bubbles or else stayed. Either way, the dyes stained whatever they touched, sometimes permanently.

Then in 2003, Kehoe found a dye that when combined with soapy water actually stuck to the bubbles but could be washed off surfaces. Excited by this discovery, the toy company prepared to launch their new product last year, only to discover during the test run that for parents, washable wasn't good enough.

Help from chemist

Finally realizing he didn't know enough chemistry to do this, Kehoe sought the help of a chemist. This is where Ram Sabnis, a man who holds patents in several fields and has a doctorate in dye chemistry, comes into the story.

After several thousand experiments, Sabnis found a way to use lactone rings as the base for the dye he combined with the bubble mixture. Think of the ring as a door: when the ring is open, it absorbs all light except for the color of the bubble dye. When the ring is closed, light passes through the bubble, effectively getting rid of the color.

The lactone ring's work is familiar to those who've seen thermochroic paint jobs on cars, certain Barbie dolls and mood rings. Temperature and pH changes cause the leuco dyes on the paints and doll hairs to switch from colored to colorless and back again as the lactone ring opens and closes, depending on whether or not protons come or go.

Available in Feb.

Last February, Sabnis created a colored bubble and watched it pop. This time, unlike Kehoe's previous experiments, nothing remained; the color had disappeared along with the bubble.

Sabnis kept a log of his experiments and he was able to reproduce this outcome over and over again using other dyes he created using the same method to produce a variety of colors.

Kehoe expects to have his colored bubble solution on the market by February 2006.

In the meantime, after years of hard work, he'll be enjoying a very colorful and bubbly holiday season that's bound to bring joy to everyone. And he won't even have to pop the cork to do so.

ASK THE DENTIST
Paul R. De Castro, DMD

Rotten baby teeth

MY NEIGHBOR HAS A DAUGHTER whose teeth are all rotten. What happened? She's only 2 and her teeth are all black.—Josephine R.

If the young child's teeth are rotten, it's usually because she is sleeping with the milk bottle in her mouth. Rotten or decayed teeth develop when milk or sweet liquids like apple juice cover the baby teeth for a long time. Bacteria in the mouth and the sugar in the milk and juice produce acids that eat the teeth.

Decay can manifest itself as brown or black in soft areas of the teeth. If you are close to your neighbor then advice her to bring her daughter to a dentist for a checkup and treatment of the decay.

Study: bitter chocolate could be sweet for heart

GENEVA—A STRIP OR TWO OF dark or bitter chocolate may not only bring a touch of seasonal cheer but can also help smokers avoid heart disease, according to a Swiss research.

Researchers at Zurich's University Hospital found after tests with 20 smokers that dark chocolate with a relatively high cocoa content (75 percent) improved blood circulation "significantly," the study in the British medical journal Heart said.

8-hour effect

The effects were said to have lasted up to eight hours and also resulted in an increase in beneficial antioxydants, while substances that can produce harmful blood clots declined.

Smokers are regarded as being at greater risk of hardening of the arteries and cardiovascular problems.

White chocolate

Similar tests with white chocolate—which has a low cocoa content—were without effect, according to the researchers, who said more studies were needed.

The tests were carried out with 40 grams of bitter chocolate.

Research published by the American Heart Association earlier this year said a daily bar-sized helping of dark chocolate could lower blood pressure and improve insulin resistance.

AFP

UP College of Medicine turns 100

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

MEDICAL FILES

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPpines College of Medicine (UPCM) celebrates its centennial anniversary this month. Its history includes a remarkable century of heritage, healing, humanity and heroism.

The UPCM was established in an era when quackery was the dominant form of medicine. Superstitions and myths also markedly influenced beliefs about physical health and well-being, and illness was largely attributed to religious or spiritual phenomena, or even sorcery.

Dr. Victor Heiser, who also served as the first director of the Philippine General Hospital, described the situation in his book "An American Doctor's Odyssey": "When we arrived the hospitals were of the most primitive type. There was not a good operating room in the Islands and no laboratory facilities. Modern medicine had not penetrated far."

Initially known as the Philippine Medical School, the college was established on Dec. 1, 1905 by the Philippine Commission as the first department of the future UPCM. During its pioneering years, only a handful of students were enrolled, using limited equipment loaned by various government institutions.

Dr. Paul Freer was the medical school's first dean. After four years, Dr. Fernando Calderon became the first Filipino dean and subsequently, the first Filipino director of the PGH.

Japanese occupation

The UPCM-PGH system played a significant role during the Japanese occupation. The UP closed down except for the UPCM primarily to prevent disruption of work at the PGH, where doctors and nurses worked beyond their call of duty to serve the wounded and the sick especially during times of epidemics.

Dr. Antonio G. Sison was the college dean and also served as president of the university for a time. He said: "It was felt that the people needed the continued medical and hospital ministrations more during those crucial days than at any other period."

The succeeding post-war deans did their part in responding to the challenges of their times. The academic curriculum was subjected to regular reappraisals and revisions, putting emphasis on the social consciousness and responsibility of its graduates.

In an innovative experiment in medical education, the UPCM established the School of Health Sciences (SHS) in Tacloban, Leyte in 1976. It aimed to develop community-oriented health workers who would return to render service in the underserved places of origin from where they were recruited.

The school was a "model for shifting health sciences education toward community orientation and community-based learning." Back then there was already the dual problems of "brain drain" and the uneven distribution of health manpower, which left some 70 percent of Filipinos in rural areas without adequate health and medical services.

In 1989, the SHS became an independent unit of the UPCM.

Accelerated curriculum

In 1982, UPCM introduced the accelerated medical curriculum. The 7-year curriculum integrated the premedical course with medicine proper (Intarmed, or Integrated Arts-Medicine Program).

This pioneering effort provided exposure to the humanities and synchronized the basic and clinical disciplines. Because of the intense rigors and requirements of the program, only exceptional high school graduates were admitted to the program.

Through the decades, the UPCM effectively adapted to a constantly shifting landscape of health and technology, science and society. We salute it on the important role it has played in the last 100 years.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Dec. 23, 2005)

Stocks	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	33.5	34	33.5	34	334,900
Bank of the Phil. Islands	55	56.5	55	56	665,700
China Banking Corp.	610	610	610	610	3,010
Citystate Savings Bank	17.75	18	17.75	18	1,600
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	57.5	59	57.5	59	150,600
International Exch. Bank	20.75	21	20.5	20.5	110,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	33	33	33	33	407,900
Philippine National Bank	31.5	32.5	31.5	32.5	8,200
Phil. Savings Bank	36	36	36	36	600
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14	14	14	14	2,000
Security Bank Corp.	33.5	33.5	33.5	33.5	36,600
Union Bank of the Phil.	32	32	32	32	65,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	140	140	140	140	310
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2100	2100	2100	2100	420
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	13	13	13	13	23,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.9	0.94	0.9	0.94	2,620,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	725	740	725	735	182,350
Ipeople Inc.	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	30,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.45	3.5	3.45	3.5	2,877,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1785	1815	1785	1815	37,950
Ivantage Corp.	0.58	0.59	0.58	0.59	3,500,000
Philweb Corp.	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.015	51,700,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	14.5	15	14.5	15	16,900
Manila Electric Co. B	22	22	21.75	21.75	138,400
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.3	6.4	6.3	6.4	7,488,000
Petron Corp.	4.4	4.55	4.4	4.55	3,725,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.94	0.96	0.94	0.96	340,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.72	1.74	1.72	1.72	335,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4	95,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	30,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.79	0.8	1,020,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	20,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.4	4.4	4.35	4.4	997,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	83,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	22.25	22.75	22.25	22.75	24,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	42	42	42	42	248,700
Pancake House Inc.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	5,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64.5	64.5	64	64.5	53,700
San Miguel Corp. B	87	88.5	86.5	88.5	138,400
Universal Robina Corp.	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5	50,200
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	700,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	6,000,000
Ayala Corp.	315	320	315	320	147,520
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	470,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.9	4.95	4.9	4.95	83,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	9,300,000
APC Group Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	50,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.007	0.0065	0.007	11,000,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9	9	9	9	111,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.12	1.1	1.1	10,245,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	100,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.31	580,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.05	3.1	281,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.025	0.026	0.025	0.026	21,000,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	120,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	48	48.5	48	48.5	181,800
Global Equities Inc.	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	2,100,000
Ionics Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	11,000
Jardine Davies Inc.	22	22	22	22	2,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.35	3.4	2,481,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.48	1.48	1.48	1.48	5,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	400,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.26	1.28	1.26	1.26	2,101,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.35	5,330,000
Paxys Inc.	6	6.1	6	6	275,000
SM Investments Corp.	240	240	239	240	138,070
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Picop Resources Inc.	0.0825	0.085	0.0825	0.085	600,000
Pryce Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	500,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1	1.04	1	1.04	7,460,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.72	100,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	202,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.65	2.65	2.65	2.65	5,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	12.75	12.75	12.75	12.75	22,100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	9.5	9.5	9.4	9.4	97,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.8	10	9.8	10	2,227,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	260,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.96	1.96	1.94	1.94	74,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	950,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	100,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.41	0.42	0.41	0.42	200,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.36	1.38	1.36	1.38	2,504,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	600,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.28	2.3	2.28	2.28	58,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	100,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.6	9,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	182,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.1	8.3	8	8.3	4,264,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	40,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.5	5.8	5.5	5.8	100,000
Benguet Corp. A	7	7	7	7	2,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.215	0.22	0.215	0.215	6,930,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.245	0.25	0.245	0.25	2,460,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.018	0.019	0.018	0.018	50,700,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.028	8,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.005	0.0055	0.005	0.0055	75,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.36	1.36	1.34	1.34	1,481,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.68	1.72	1.68	1.72	4,877,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	26.5	27.5	26.5	27.5	282,900
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	100,000
OIL					
Interport Res.	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	3,000,000
Pacifica	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	1,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	25,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	1,500,000

CURRENCIES

December 23, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.842389	1.000000	53.2890
Japan	Yen	0.007218	0.008568	0.4566
United Kingdom	Pound	1.464325	1.738300	92.6323
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.108656	0.128986	6.8735
Switzerland	Franc	0.642016	0.762137	40.6135
Canada	Dollar	0.721841	0.856898	45.6632
Singapore	Dollar	0.504757	0.599197	31.9306
Australia	Dollar	0.616277	0.731582	38.9853
Bahrain	Dinar	2.235047	2.653224	141.3877
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.224631	0.266660	14.2100
Brunei	Dollar	0.503249	0.597407	31.8352
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000086	0.000102	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.020586	0.024438	1.3023
UAE	Dirham	0.229359	0.272272	14.5091
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.187100	63.2594
Argentina	Peso	0.278246	0.330306	17.6017
Brazil	Real	0.362084	0.429830	22.9052
Denmark	Kroner	0.134085	0.159172	8.4821
India	Rupee	0.018661	0.022153	1.1805
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.222942	0.264655	14.1032
Mexico	New Peso	0.079051	0.093841	5.0007
New Zealand	Dollar	0.567839	0.674082	35.9212
Norway	Kroner	0.124160	0.147390	7.8543
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014103	0.016742	0.8922
South Africa	Rand	0.132716	0.157547	8.3955
Korea	Won	0.000829	0.000984	0.0524
Sweden	Kroner	0.105698	0.125474	6.6864
Syria	Pound	0.016228	0.019264	1.0266
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025363	0.030108	1.6044
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000393	0.000466	0.0248

Iran firm . . .

From page B1

year after going commercial, it was not able to take advantage of the BOI-granted incentives.

The Bataan polyethylene plant has a rated capacity of 275,000 metric tons a year, with enough room for future capacity expansion.

The facility uses the renowned BP innovene gas phase process, which entails the processing of the polyethylene resin for distribution to local plastic producers.

It was decommissioned in 2003, before being acquired by Mahec last year through a debt and equity purchase from the consortium composed of the United Kingdom's British Petroleum, Malaysia's Petronas, Japan's Sumitomo and some local investors.

Shares close . . .

From page B1

high of 2,111.46. It touched a low of 2,078.58. Volume was 364 million shares worth P682 million.

The broader all-shares index advanced 14.86 points to 1,277.59.

Gainers beat losers 46 to 21, with 39 stocks unchanged.

"Some market players are already positioning for next year," said Mark Alan Canizares of Citiseconline.com.

"They feel that it's better to start buying now while most investors are on vacation, rather than later when stock prices are already rising," he added.

PLDT rose P40 to P1,815 after Moody's Investors Service upgraded the company to reflect its improving financial profile. *AFP*

SMC studies Del Monte deal

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FOOD AND BEVERAGE giant San Miguel Corp. is reviewing its proposed purchase of Singapore-listed Del Monte Philippines Ltd. for possible conflict with existing non-compete arrangements with The Coca-Cola Company (TCCC).

In a mandatory conditional cash offer document filed with the Stock Exchange of Singapore, PricewaterhouseCoopers Corporate Finance Pte. Ltd., on behalf of Nutriasia Pacific—the joint venture firm of San Miguel and the Campos Group of companies, said San Miguel was now checking the applicability of its non-compete arrangements with Coke on Del Monte's existing business of juice and drinks distribution in the Philippines.

PricewaterhouseCoopers said that if a conflict is found, the options available to San Miguel are: San Miguel buying the competing business for itself or on behalf of CCBPI or TCCC within one year after Nutriasia Pacific buys 51 percent of Del Monte, Del Monte disposing of its competing business to a third party, or Del Monte discontinuing the competing business.

Capitol seeks SEC takeover

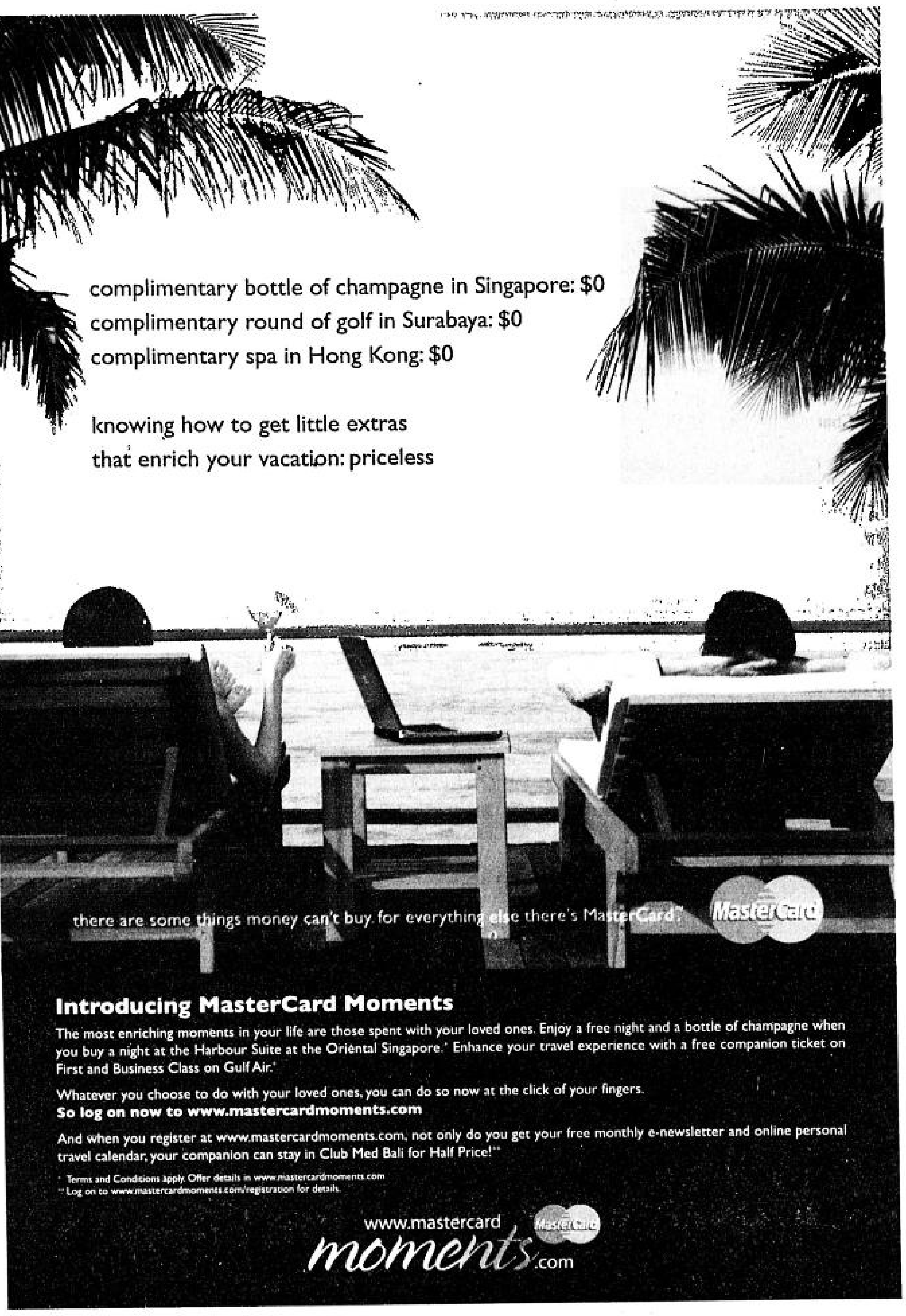
PRE-NEED FIRM Capitol Plans Inc. has asked the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), or the previous owner, to take over its operations after it found undisclosed liabilities worth P24 million in its books.

Capitol chair Eduardo Madrid, who took over the operations of Capitol Plans in 2003, has met with the previous owner, the Ancheta group, but they failed to agree on how to deal with the liabilities.

Madrid said in a letter to the SEC that he has submitted a rehabilitation plan to the SEC, which involved building up the company's trust fund, putting up additional capital of up to P50 million in either property or cash and settling liabilities to plan holders.

SEC Commission Secretary Gerard Lukban said the regulator was reviewing the request of Capitol Plans for the SEC to take over its operations.

But even before the SEC was reorganized in 2000, Capitol Plans was already considered inactive and was no longer selling securities since it had no dealer's license. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*



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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that CHINA BANKING CORP. Cert. No. 16169 for TWO HUNDRED FIFTEEN (215) shares issued in the name of INVESTORS SECURITIES, INC. was reported lost. If no contest received new certificate will be issued.

(PDI - Dec. 10, 17 & 24, 2005)

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Imelda Guevarra Parafina who died on Decemeber 1, 2005 were extrajudicially settled in accordance with the extrajudicial settlement with self-adjudication of estate by self-heir duly executed before Notary Public Atty Arleen A. Selvacion of Quezon City per Doc 497 Page 101 Book X Series 2005 (PDI-Dec. 17, 24 & 31, 2005)

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

AN EXTRA JUDICIAL PARTITION HAS BEEN FILED BY THE HEIRS OF THE LATE EUSTAQUIO C. IGNACIO WHO DIED INTESTATE ON JAN. 27, 1970, BERNABE I. SANTOS WHO DIED INTESTATE ON JULY 23, 1992, AND BENJAMIN C. DAVID WHO DIED INTESTATE ON AUGUST 20, 2002, ALL AT TAGUIG METRO MANILA LEAVING SIX (6) PARCELS OF LAND DESCRIBED AS TCT NOS 20033R, 20034R, 20035R, 20036R, AND 20037R, ALL SITUATED AT PULONG MABA PORAC, PAMPANGA. SWORN TO BEFORE NOTARY PUBLIC PORFIRIO M. BAUTISTA OF PARAÑAQUE CITY UNDER DOC. # 135 PAGE # 28 BOOK # 1 SERIES OF 2003. (PDI - DEC. 10, 17 & 24, 2005)

PERSONAL

PRAYER TO THE
HOLY SPIRIT

Holy Spirit, Thou who make me see everything and show me the way to reach my ideal. You who give me the divine gift to forgive and forget the wrong that is done to me and who are in all instances of my life with me. I, in this short dialogue, want to thank You for everything and confirm once more that I never want to be separated from You no matter how great the material desires may be. I want to be with You and my loved ones in Your perpetual glory. Amen
Person must pray this for 3 consecutive days without stating one's wish. After 3rd day your wish will be granted no matter how difficult it may be. Promise to publish this as soon as your favor has been granted. MTO

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To support the continued growth of its business, Barclays Capital is planning to hire a significant number of talented, highly-motivated team players in 2006 to work in IT, Finance and Operations-related roles in the firm's state-of-the-art International Business Centre in central Singapore. The positions on offer range from entry-level to middle management positions, depending on the qualifications and experience of successful candidates.

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  - Pass a medical exam/background check
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  - Good communication in English (verbal and written)
  - Able to work long hours and flexible work schedule
  - Possess good knowledge of computer system/hardware/software

For applicants who fit the above requirements, please send your CV with picture by email to rewgfmsdm@slb.com. Only e-mail applications will be reviewed. Tests/interviews for qualified candidates will be conducted on the 13th to 16th of-Jan-2006 in Manila.

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OBITUARIES

THE HERITAGE PARK
FORT BONIFACIO
Funeral Home and Crematory
845-2334 to 38; 845-2440

Our Beloved

Feliza Risos Vda. de Narvaez

of Bacoor, Cavite

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord at Los Angeles, California, U.S.A. on December 21, 2005 at the age of 86.

Her bereaved children: **Jerry & Edith Narvaez, Rey & Tita Pimentel, Marcelino & Aida Narvaez, Cecille Narvaez, Roberto & Noemi Narvaez, Paul & Nenette Narvaez**; grandchildren, other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at St. Elizabeth Anne Chapel, Los Angeles, California.

Interment will be on December 28, 2005 at the Queen of Heaven Cemetery at Rowland Heights, CA, USA.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring...

INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

WE ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS
and bank-to-bank payments

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT
MESSAGE OF THANKS
DEATH ANNIVERSARY
REQUIEMS
FREE OBIT DESIGN

"Even
when I
walk
through
a dark
valley, I
feel no
harm, For
you are
at my
side,
your rod
and staff
give me
courage..."
Psalm 23:4

In Loving Memory

on the Twelfth Death Anniversary of

DOÑA JUANA VILLARICA MARTEL

January 27, 1898 – December 25, 1993

Masses will be offered for her **tomorrow, December 25, 2005** at the following churches:

MARY THE QUEEN PARISH *Madison St., Greenhills, San Juan*	6:00 A.M.
REDEMPTORIST CHURCH *Baclaran, Parañaque City*	6:00 A.M.
MINOR BASILICA OF THE BLACK NAZARENE *Quiapo, Manila*	6:00 A.M.
CHRIST THE KING PARISH *Green Meadows Avenue, Quezon City*	6:00 A.M.
SANCTUARIO DE SAN JOSE *Greenhills, Mandaluyong City*	6:15 A.M.
SHRINE OF MARY QUEEN OF PEACE *Our Lady of EDSA, Quezon City*	8:00 A.M.
ST. ALPHONSUS MARY DE LIGUORI CHURCH *Magallanes Village, Makati City*	11:00 A.M.
NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY *Sto. Domingo, Quezon City*	12:00 N.N
MT. CARMEL SHRINE *Doña J. Rodriguez St., New Manila, Quezon City*	12:15 N.N.
SANCTUARIO DE SAN ANTONIO *McKinley Road, Forbes Park, Makati City*	4:30 P.M.
ST. JOHN BOSCO PARISH *A. Arnaiz Ave. Cor. Amorsolo St., Makati City*	4:30 P.M.
ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE PARISH *Kalayaan Avenue, Bel-Air II, Makati City*	5:00 P.M.
HARRISON PLAZA CHAPEL *2/F, Harrison Plaza Shopping City, Malate, Manila*	5:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M.
ST. FRANCIS PARISH CHURCH *Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City*	5:30 P.M.

Her children,
ENRIQUE
ANTONIO, JR. & BELEN LOVINA TICZON
JOSE & OLGA SEVERINO
CARLOS & ETELKA JUNGSCHLAGER
RODOLFO & ALITA ROMUALDEZ
RICARDO & LETICIA MATIAS (†)

Her Sister, ISABEL V. RAMOS
Nephews, Nieces, Grandchildren & Great Grandchildren request all pious readers to join them in prayer for the eternal repose of her soul.

CLASSIFIEDS

President Arroyo leads 'Pamaskong Salubong sa OFWs'

PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL Arroyo will lead the nation in the time-honored tradition of honoring the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) returning to the country to take their Christmas vacations through the Pamaskong Salubong ng Pangulo sa OFWs Friday (Dec. 23, 2005), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) announced.

"This is the best welcome that the nation affords the OFWs as the President herself manifests a fitting appreciation to our global champions of the Filipino work ethics and culture for their contributions to nation-building and growth," Labor and Employment Acting Secretary Danilo P. Cruz said.

Earlier, Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas led the successful launching of the DOLE's Pamaskong Handog sa OFWs at the NAIA, of which the Salubong ng Pangulo was the highlight. She announced that surprise gifts from the President, including a Norkis-Yamaha mobile livelihood store, await four lucky OFWs during the Presidential Salubong.

Cruz said this is now the 12th year that the DOLE, and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the two agencies in charge of the OFWs, have organized the annual Presidential Salubong for the OFWs.

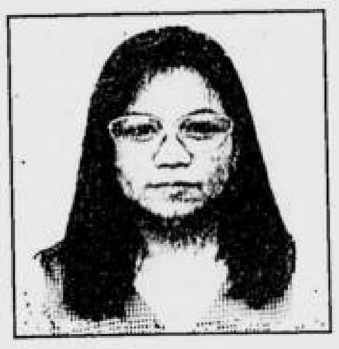
Apart from Acting Secretary Cruz, several government officials are also expected to accompany the President in the event set at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), including Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo, Tourism Secretary Ace H. Durano, NAIA General Manager Alfonso G. Cusi, and Administrators Marianito D. Roque of the OWWA, and Rosalinda D. Baldoz of the POEA.

Meanwhile, Cruz said that per the DOLE's preliminary figures, the total number of OFW overseas employment contracts processed rose to 936,675 as of Dec. 19, 2005, surpassing by 23,803 the 912,872 OFW contracts processed in the same period in 2004.

"We expect the deployment trend worldwide, in more than 180 destinations, to sustain and approach the one-million mark this year, surpassing the total 933,588 OFWs deployed globally in 2004," the Acting Labor chief said.

PASKO'Y MALIGAYA, PAMILYA'Y SAMA-SAMA
A heart-touching moment at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport as a vacationing OFW and her toddler (in cap), are welcomed by Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas (in front) during the recent launching of the Pamaskong Handog sa OFWs at the NAIA. The program will continue until Jan. 15, 2006 on the theme, 'Pasko'y Maligaya, Pamilya'y Sama-Sama (A Happy Christmas with the Family Together).' Assisting Sto. Tomas in welcoming the OFWs are DOLE Undersecretary for Employment Danilo P. Cruz (not seen in photo), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) Administrator Marianito D. Roque (second from right), and other government officials.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC



Reward will be given to any person who could give any help or information on the whereabouts of **Luzviminda Palcon y Alvarez**, a.k.a. **Estella A. Ang**, whose picture appears above. Please contact **Che** at **8405025.**

(PDI – December 24, 2005)

NOTICE

This is to inform the public that **Esperanza S. Mariano**, Sales Operations Assistant, Laoag District Office, **Loyola Plans Consolidated, Inc.** has retired from her services since April 5, 2005. Two (2) official receipts of the company under her custody (Nos. C-001198927 and C-001198828) are unaccounted. All Claims arising out of this issue of said OR's are to be paid / settled by Esperanza S. Mariano in form of said documents.

(PDI-Dec. 24, 30, 2005; & Jan. 6, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
Local Civil Registry Office
Province : Iloilo
City : Iloilo

NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

In compliance with Section 5 of R A 9048, a notice is hereby served to the public that Henry M. Regidor has filed with this office a petition for change of first name from REGIDOR HENRY to HENRY in the birth certificate of Regidor Henry M. Regidor who was born on May 26, 1980 at Brgy. Cacub Koronadal, South Cotabato and whose parents are Elmio M. Masula and Mariano L. Regidor.

Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition with this Office not later than January 15, 2006.

(Sgd.) TERESITA U. JACOMILLE
City Civil Registrar

(PDI – Dec 24 & 31, 2005)

PHILIPPINE HEART CENTER
East Avenue, Quezon City

Is now accepting applications for
Academic Year 2006

FELLOWSHIPS:

I. **3-Year Fellowship Training Program in Adult Cardiology**
  - Certificate of Residency Training in Internal Medicine accredited by PCP
  - PCP Diplomate

II. **1-Year Subspecialty Fellowship Training Program in Electrophysiology, Cardiac Rehabilitation, Non-Invasive Cardiology, Invasive Cardiology, Peripheral Vascular and Critical Care Cardiology.**
  - Have completed Residency Training in Internal Medicine and Fellowship in Cardiology in PCP and PCC accredited institutions
  - PCP Diplomate
  - Submit a research proposal
  - Certificate of Fellowship

★ **Deadline for submission of application is on January 31, 2006**
★ **Academic Year 2006 starts on April 1, 2006**

III. **CV Anesthesiology Division**
  - 3 years Residency in General Anesthesia accredited by PBA (Board eligible)

IV. **Pediatric Cardiovascular Medicine Department**
  - 3 years Residency in General Pediatric accredited by PPS
  - at least passed written examination for Diplomate in Pediatrics

V. **Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery Division**
  - 4 years Residency in General Surgery accredited by PCS (Board eligible)

★ **Deadline for submission of application is on December 28, 2005**
★ **Academic Year 2006 starts on January 1, 2006**

RESIDENCIES : (For Medical Board Passers)

I. **Nuclear Medicine Section**
  - **Academic Graduates** – Medical School
  - **Medical Board Passer**

★ **Deadline for submission of application is on December 28, 2005**
★ **Academic Year 2006 starts on January 1, 2006**

General Requirements:
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2. Transcript of Records with the General Weighted Average
3. Itemized Board Rating
4. Three (3) Letters of Recommendation with at least one letter written by the Training Officer &/or Director of the previous Training Programs / duplicate letters or photocopies signed by different Doctors will not be accepted)
5. Four (4) pcs. 2"x2" colored picture

Please address your communications to:
ARISTIDES G. PANLILIO, M.D.
Department Manager II
Office of Education and Research
Philippine Heart Center
East Avenue, Quezon City

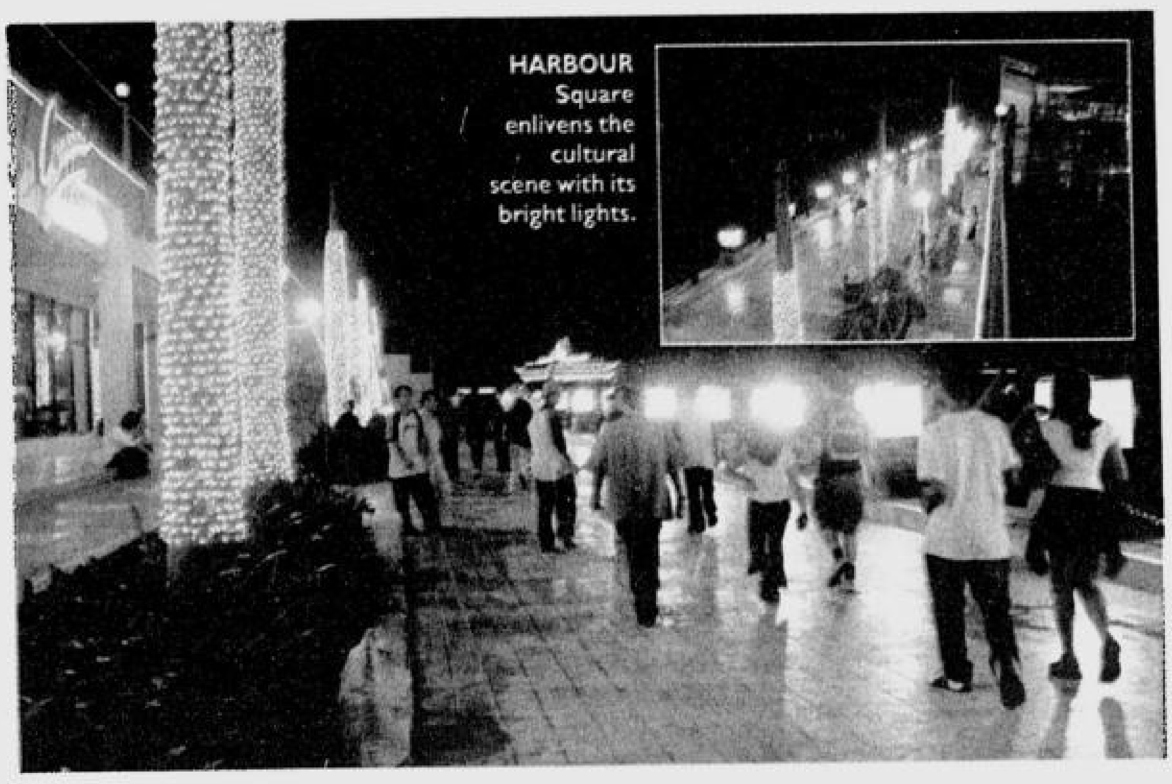
For further inquiries, please contact Ms. Carmela M. Ocasion or Ms. Cleopatra Q. Palencia with Tel. Nos. 925-2401 locals 3234, 3235, 3236 & 3237 and Telefax 926-9622 or you can email to oer@phc.gov.ph

POEA 24-HR HOTLINES 722-1144 • 722-1155

BAYSIDE, ORTIGAS, C5 AREAS

3 edifices to spur development

By Tessa R. Salazar


HARBOUR Square enlivens the cultural scene with its bright lights.

THREE MORE structures have joined the property boom bandwagon.

An unlikely complement to the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the art center of Manila, opened last week within the CCP complex. The 2-story, 1.2-hectare Harbour Square is several steps away from the bayside, the CCP main theater and the Folk Arts theater.

Meanwhile, a 4.5-hectare tri-mall development is about to rise at the corner of Ortigas Avenue, C5 and Julia Vargas. The project targets the markets of Makati, Cainta, Quezon City, San Juan and Mandaluyong areas.

This development allocates 35 percent of its property to greenery and landscaping, with a 1,400-car covered parking capacity to boot.

The 45-story East of Galleria condominium right at the heart of the Ortigas skyline (on Topaz Street, Ortigas Center) will also rise to blend in with Robinsons Galleria Mall's proximity value using its combination of bi-level and loft-type units.

Ongoing redevelopment

Harbour Square has blended in with its environment as it provides a large area for open spaces for previews of up-and-coming cultural shows and performances of the CCP. Its theme is centered on tourism, food and entertainment as well as the arts.

Harbour Square becomes part of the ongoing redevelopment of the CCP and the Mall of Asia where some residential condo projects are about to start within the next few years.

With the modernistic name of Silver City, the tri-mall project will feature an Auto Mall, Fusion-tech Mall and the Wellness Mall.

Its Auto Mall is a convention-glass type of architecture, which will showcase 80 to 100 brand-new cars from leading manufacturers and automotive dealers. It will also offer car accessories and from various shops and parts dealers, while banks and finance services, insurance services, sports lifestyle boutiques, motorbikes and jet ski products, and an event center will also be accessible.

The Fusion-tech Mall has an anchor establishment 10,000 sq-m call center inside its core and is surrounded by technology-oriented retail locators such as telecommunication hubs, IT and computer products, consumer electronics and appliances.

The mall, which will be Wi-Fi compliant, will have food and beverage locators.

Finally, the Wellness Mall will boast of a 3-story venue for medical services, diagnostic/laboratories, ultrasound services, pharmaceuticals, beauty centers, children's playground, fitness gym and spas. The CCP management and the developer of Harbour Square had planned for CCP to be a regular destination not only for tourists but also for the locals to patronize local arts and culture in a more massive and continuing way.

Global trend

"Most of the arts and cultural centers, including museums in almost all parts of the world have started to recreate their areas by establishing food and entertainment development concepts within their respective centers. It's a global trend that has made so much sense," said Roger M. Garcia, director for communications, Meedson Properties Corp. Meedson is the developer of Harbour Square.

He added that CCP, recognized as the best cultural site in Asia for decades, has had to make such a move to remain at par with other arts and culture centers in the region.

Said Garcia: "Anywhere in the world, one of the most expensive pieces of property is located within the bay area. The world-famous Manila Bay sunset and its proximity to the arts and culture, and tourist belt areas are the key factors why a development such as Harbour Square is a must."

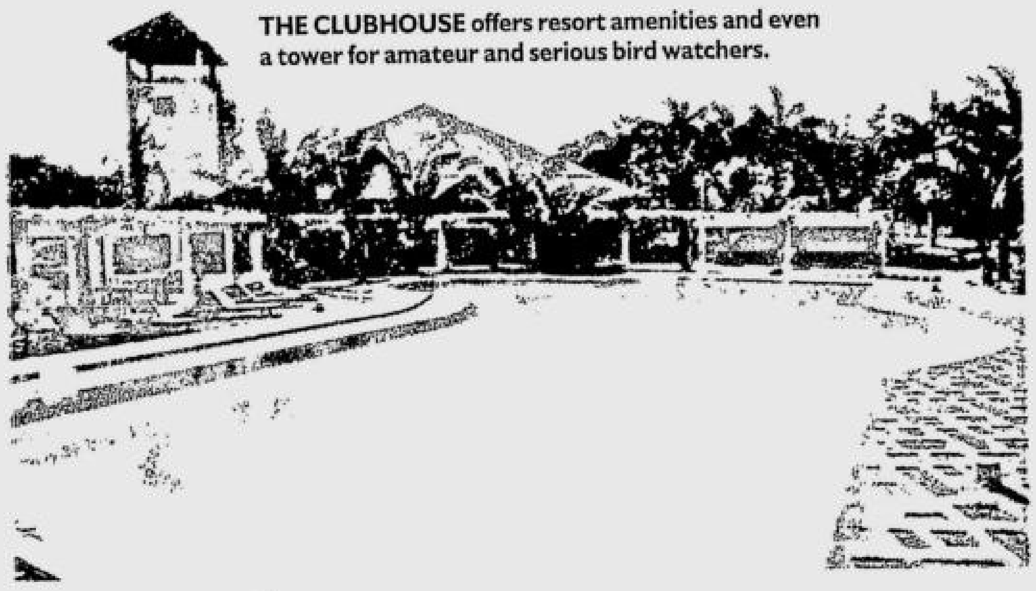
David Wuson, corporate planning director of MC Mall Inc., said the Automall would cut the hassle of hopping from one dealer to the other so customers could compare the cars that they want on the spot.

"We conceptualized the niche-retail consumerism pattern after what ShoeMart started 40 years ago. We would also take what MC Home Depot did with its hardware and construction materials. They started 10 years ago with one hectare of lease space to what is now 6 hectares with a lot of similar business competitors joining the bandwagon," he said.

Making better choices

The main objective of Silver City's themed malls, he added, would be the ambience and the convenience that would empower consumers to make better choices in their buying decisions.

"Since no new condo developments were being built in Ortigas for the last few years, Robinsons Land took note of the opportunity and decided to build a new tower to serve the need," said Danilo E. Ignacio, general manager of Robinsons Land high-rise building division.


THE CLUBHOUSE offers resort amenities and even a tower for amateur and serious bird watchers.

2 luxurious residential enclaves

By Charles E. Buban

IMAGINE WAKING UP EVERY DAY TO THE sight of verdant greens and award-winning fairways. This is what developer Sta. Elena Properties Inc. would like its future residents to enjoy in its soon-to-rise residential communities—the Sta. Elena Village Banahaw and Sta. Elena Village Sierra Madre.

These two luxurious residential enclaves are located within the 260-hectare Sta. Elena Golf and Country Club in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, a multiawarded golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. and whose nature sanctuary of lush forests and rich flora and fauna is certified by Audubon (an international body that ensures that a commitment to environmental quality remains at the forefront of golf course development, management and the game of golf).

Sta. Elena's all-weather, 27-hole championship golf course was adjudged two times in a row by Asian Golf Monthly Magazine as the Best Golf Course in the country and first runner-up in Asia.

"Sta. Elena villages offer a unique style of living around one of Asia's best golf courses and most environment-friendly nature sanctuary. Here, our future residents will gain a reviving, fresh perspective and a new lease on life," promises Bienvenido Tantoco Jr., general manager of Sta. Elena Properties Inc.

Interconnected

Palafox & Associates principal founder and managing partner Felino Palafox Jr. says the Banahaw and Sierra Madre communities has been designed so that everything will be interconnected—both physically and visually—from the windows to the front of homes, from the sidewalks to the main roads, from the garage to the back alleys, and from the house to the backyard of forests and fairways.

"The villages will be very exclusive as Sta. Elena allowed just a few slots—only 100 single-detached homes will be available for the Banahaw with sizes ranging from 600 to 1,000 sq m," describes Tantoco.

Like the much bigger Banahaw, the Sierra Madre community will also accommodate just a few homes: 150 single-detached homes ranging from 350 to 500 sq m.

While the Banahaw will be priced between P6 million and P13 million, Sierra Madre will be priced between P3 million and P6 million.

"With the Banahaw and Sierra Madre, Sta. Elena can now fulfill our clients' aspiration of living in a stunningly beautiful place that respects nature and nurtures family bonding," says Tantoco.

Places where people gather

LIVING ARCHITECTURE

Marcos de Guzman Jr.

FOR THE LAST TWO DECADES, I have been asked to design and redesign clubhouses by real estate developers. And with them I have learned the effective ways of doing it. We have analyzed and validated the concepts behind these clubhouses and we discovered why some worked while the rest turned out to be mere white elephants.

You may currently reside in a relatively new development with a clubhouse that is ill-maintained or underutilized. These are not isolated cases. Perhaps, the reason is that most developers design for prestige and to flaunt and impress their prospective buyers rather than for a more important reason: function.

It may be no different from the Imelda structures like the Metro Manila Film Fest building and some others in the reclamation area. Some are suffering due to huge maintenance costs. Others have grossly miscalculated operating expenses.

Improper design

Sports and country clubs are no different. I recently visited some with other designers and we saw which areas are useful and which are mere dust collectors. In the end, users turn out to be the losers because they have to shoulder the premium of maintaining it.

Improper design would result to more manpower for maintenance and security. Safety is also compromised. Electricity cost shoots up due to inadequate natural lighting and ventilation. Some of these clubhouses continue to operate because the residents can still afford to finance it. However, this poses an important question if they should really be paying as much when it could have been designed more properly.

Learning by mistakes

Now, the developers are learning. It turns out that the best source of information is their mistakes, more so the mistakes of others. A thorough analysis of the existing similar developments is a fountain of information and one can replicate which of these structures worked and which have to be avoided.

Another equally important or may even be a more important source of information would be the users. They can first-handedly supply their experience for a redevelopment of an existing clubhouse. For a new development, the demographics of the users must be established, their needs identified and problems addressed.

There always is a club manager or cub administrator who handles the daily activities of the club. He knows about the complaints and the problems encountered. We need not go to each member and get information because the club manager would already know this by heart. Safety issues must always be brought to the attention of the club manager for proper action. What are learned here are very useful to the designers.

An impressive structure can only serve those looking at it. Unfortunately, more often that not, it is not really serving the ones using it. This made us ask ourselves for what purpose are we designing these structures. To impress is definitely a superficial reason for in the end the one who pays and shoulders the hard realities of maintenance are the end-users.

Functionality

This brought us to the realization that a truly impressive structure is a functional one. This is applicable in designing houses or even in the design of practically just anything. In buying your next home, don't forget to include the subdivision amenities as part of your considerations.

Don't let the exterior deceive you. See if it works by spending a few days there for a picnic or a family activity. I am sure that the developers wouldn't mind if you chose to experience the feel of the place prior to making your hard-earned investment.

In case this option is not welcomed by the developers, try to find out more about the development. There could be more that you should know about. Does it only look good on the outside? Is it practical? Is it safe for your kids? Find out the monthly dues and maintenance expenses you will eventually be paying for. This may not be the kind of surprise that you want to have.

AERIAL view of the Ayala Westgrove Heights Recreation Center

One Legazpi Park condo units to be delivered to buyers soon

AYALA LAND PREMIER ENDS THE YEAR on a high note with another milestone for one of its most prestigious projects.

Buyers of One Legazpi Park units will be pleased to know that their exceptionally designed condominium units will be available for delivery beginning this month, even earlier than promised. Units in the 6th to 19th floors were ready for inspection at the start of this month while those in higher floors will be ready beginning in January.

Despite the early handover, new residents are assured of exemplary quality that only the country's leading property developer, Ayala Land, can offer. And, as if that weren't enough to inspire holiday cheer, One Legazpi Park homeowners are guaranteed more value for money with the addition of several new upgrades to their handsome new abodes.

These upgrades add to each home's overall esthetic presence, and in some cases, provide them with ease and convenience in daily maintenance or chores. On top of the promised specifications and finishes, a number of One Legazpi Park units have been improved to include new and better features.

Selected units now boast of larger 2 x 12-inch narra parquet instead of the original 2 x 8-inch parquet. Ceilings in all units have been upgraded to a textured paint finish for a more dramatic finish.

One Legazpi Park unit owners are guaranteed peace of mind as the Ayala Property Management Corp. will provide continued assistance from the time they move in until long after turnover.

The multiawarded condominium project has received accolades such as the 4 Million Safe Man Hours Award from its general contractor EEI Corp. last year, as well as the Safest and Best Project in Makati City Award from the Makati City Hall in 2003. For further inquiries about other Ayala Land Premier residential projects, please call 728-7000, log on to www.ayalaland.com.ph or e-mail ayala-sales@ayalaland.com.ph.

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TÜV

Refresh supports Pathways for youth development

UNIVERSAL ROBINA CORP'S (URC) Refresh Mineral Water and Refresh Flavored Drinks recently supported Ateneo de Manila's Pathways to Higher Education in its recent Self-Enhancement Workshop (SEW). This project is just the start of URC's continuous support to Pathways. Pathways helps financially-challenged, academically-gifted public high school students complete a college education, through scholarships in various universities and colleges around the country. It also prepares public high school students for higher education by giving them advanced tutorial classes and educational resources, as well as career development seminars for parents.

"We at URC strongly believe in supporting projects for the development of the country's future leaders," said Pet Bautista, URC's executive vice president/managing director. "We all want a better future for the youth."

Pathways' SEW, is a 10-session workshop that aims to prepare the youth for the complexities of college and adult life, with lessons on discovering their own strengths, weaknesses, desires, fears, goals, and dreams. Other sessions focus on utilizing the students' specific skills to help them achieve their goals. In the last SEW sessions, which had nearly 100 participants from different schools in Marikina, Quezon City and Payatas, attendees learned about time management in a workshop called The Hours. The participants were taught Sean Convey's Time Quadrant Model, which helped them appreciate the importance of time management.

The interactive sessions also taught the students time-saving tips as well as the importance of having values to live by, such as the four core values of Pathways: commitment to excellence, responsibility, being proactive, and social commitment. The session also featured recaps of the previous personality workshops on Visioning (SEW #2) and Goal Setting (SEW #3). Bautista added, "We laud Pathways' efforts to improve the quality of people's lives by augmenting the youth's education."

spi technologies foundation
GIL@S
DepED

INNOVE PROVIDES INTERNET ACCESS TO DUMAGUETE HIGH SCHOOLS

Innove Communications Inc recently provided Internet connectivity to six public high schools in Dumaguete City. As part of its corporate social responsibility program, Innove links the Filipino youth to the rest of the world by giving them access to information and knowledge under the GILAS (Gearing-up Internet Literacy and Access to Students) program. The six schools that were benefited by this project were Ramon Teves Pastor Memorial-Dumaguete Science High School, Dumaguete City National High-Main, Negros Oriental National High School, Taclobo National High School, Hermenegilda F. Gloria Memorial High School and Junob National High School. Together with Innove in this effort were SPI Technologies Foundation, Ayala Foundation Inc (AFI), Gilas and the Department of Education (DepEd). In photo are (from left, seated) Innove chief administrative officer Racquel Cagurangan, DepEd Negros Oriental Division Superintendent Aleli Abne, AFI's Bombit Ferderos, Negros Oriental High School principal Luz Buñol, (from left, standing) Negros Oriental High School Parents, Teachers and Community Association president Avelino Arabe, DepEd Negros Oriental Division Secondary Coordinator Denma Kinkito, Negros Oriental Provincial Board Member Mariant Escano Villegas, Negros Oriental High School teacher Myrna Sun, and Negros Oriental High School IT coordinator Alma Cora Catacutan.

HYUNDAI BUS
PRESENTATION CEREMONY
HYUNDAI

HYUNDAI DONATES BUSES TO PMA

Hyundai Asia Resources Inc (Hari) welcomed the arrival of Hyundai Motor Company (HMC) president, Choi Jae Kook on Dec. 13, on his first ever visit to the Philippines. Choi's visit to the country reinforces Hyundai's commitment to the Philippines marked by Hyundai's donation of eight (8) brand new 45-seater aero buses to the Philippine government for the use of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA). The ceremonial turnover was held on Dec. 15, at the Champagne Room of the Manila Hotel. PMA Superintendent Lt. Gen. Cristolito Balaoing received the key from Choi witnessed by Philippine Defense Secretary, Avelino Cruz; Korea's Minster of Commerce, Industry and Energy, Lee Hee Beom, Senior Advisor to the President for National Security, Kwon Jin Ho; Hari honorary chair, Richard Lee and Hari managing director, Fe Agudo.

S&E IS EXCLUSIVE PHILIPPINE DISTRIBUTOR OF AVENTAIL

Software & Engineering Data Systems Inc (Sedsi), became the exclusive Philippine distributor for SSL/VPN technology leader Aventail after the contract signing and product launch held recently in New World Hotel. The acronym SSL/VPN stands for secured socket layering/virtual private network. It is a device that provides Internet users access to files or information but providing security to classified information. To know about Aventail's SSL/VPN, go to www.aventail.com. Shown are (seated, from left) Samuel F. Alamani, business unit head-VP, S&E Data Systems Inc and Michael Ang, Asia Pacific VP, Aventail; (standing, from left) JP Sianghio, CIO, Intex Holdings Corp, Johnny Loh, account manager, Aventail Asia Pacific and Benjamin R. Bustos, CEO, Intex Telecom Systems & S&E Data Systems Inc.

Fast-food chain warns suppliers on fake purchases

JOLLIBEE FOODS CORP, THE COUNTRY'S No.. 1 fast-food chain, warned the public against the modus operandi of a group of unscrupulous individuals posing as authorized employees of the company.

According to company officials of Jollibee, some suppliers called their offices to verify orders placed by certain individuals through the telephone. When they examined the faxed copy of the Purchase Order sent to suppliers, they were all verified to be fake.

Jollibee officials clarified that before the company orders from a particular supplier, they must undergo a rigid accreditation process, including a personal meeting and plant visit, to ensure that the item purchased meets the company's quality standards. Moreover, it is only after the supplier is accredited that the latter is acquainted with the company's ordering procedure.

On the other hand, the unscrupulous group instigating the fake orders prey mostly on establishments who have not been accredited or who are not aware of the company's purchasing process. The group employs the following modus operandi. A person representing himself to be an employee or franchisee of the company calls the establishment to make an order. The caller then sends a fake Purchase Order by fax. The order is placed very near the weekend so that the establishment will have little or no time at all to verify from the company's Head Office if the order is legitimate. Also, the group convinces the establishment that the goods ordered are badly needed so that the group scheduled them for pick-up during the weekend instead of being delivered to the company's premises.

Company officials said the matter has been reported to the police authorities. It was learned that the group has been using the names of other respected companies as well. They urged establishments that received orders from anyone purporting himself to be connected with Jollibee to call the Company's Purchasing Division at 634-1111 and verify first if the order is authentic.

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
National Capital Region
U.N. Avenue, Manila

Invitation to Register, Apply for Eligibility and to Bid For Trucking/Hauling Services

1. The National Food Authority, National Capital Region, U.N. Avenue, Paco, Manila, through the Approved Corporate Budget for Calendar Year 2006, intends to apply the sum of SEVENTY THREE MILLION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY EIGHT THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED FIFTY PESOS (P73,188,350.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for Trucking/Hauling Services. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall automatically be rejected at Bid Opening.
2. The National Food Authority – National Capital Region invites all interested qualified trucking/hauling service operators to register, apply for eligibility and to bid for trucking/hauling services for the hauling of 307,500 metric tons, more or less of NFA imported rice from the NFA-NCR designated unloading terminals (South/North Harbor) to its different warehouses located in Manila, Rizal and Cavite provinces with an Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) aforestated and broken down as follows:

LOT NO.	ROUTE/ DESTINATION	ESTIMATED VOLUME (MT)		APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
I	NCR Installation and Warehouses within 31 km radius	225,400	MT more or less	P 52,969,000
II	Manila to GID-Antipolo	49,450	MT more or less	P 11,966,900
III	Manila to Cardona, Rizal	1,000	MT more or less	P 245,000
IV	Manila to Cavite	31,650	MT more or less	P 8,007,450
	TOTAL	307,500	MT	P 73,188,350

Application forms and list of requirements for registration can be secured from the Regional Bids and Awards Committee (RBAC) Secretariat after payment of a non-refundable registration fee of PESO TWO THOUSAND (P2,000.00).

Only operators with Certificate of Official Registration issued by NFA-NCR RBAC may apply for eligibility and to bid for NFA Trucking/Hauling Services. The Description of an eligible bidder is contained in the Bidding Documents, Instruction to Bidders (ITB) and in the General Terms and Conditions.

The schedule of activities are as follows:

	ACTIVITIES	DATE/TIME
1.	Issuance of application for Registration Requirements	December 19 to 29, 2005 – 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
2.	Deadline for submission of registration Requirements & issuance of certificate of official registration	Not later than January 6, 2005 – 3:00 PM
3.	Issuance of application for Eligibility & List of Requirements (Bidding Documents)	January 6 to 10, 2005 – 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
4.	Pre-Bidding Conference	January 11, 2006 – 10:00 AM
5.	Bidding Proper	January 23, 2006 – 10:00 AM

3. Bidding shall be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing, Rules and Regulations (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R.A. 9184) and is restricted to organizations with at least 60% interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183); Only bids of bidders who passed the eligibility check will be opened. The process for eligibility check is described in the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the lowest calculated bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine his responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by the prospective Bidders (with Certificates of Registration issued by the RBAC) from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of TEN THOUSAND PESOS (P10,000.00). The method of payment will be in Cash. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
5. The National Food Authority, National Capital Region, reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

National Food Authority – National Capital Region
U.N. Avenue, Paco Manila
Telephone No.: 563-94-37
Fax No.: 563-94-65

(Sgd.) Atty. BASILIDES TACO
Asst. Regional Director &
Chairman, BAC, NFA-NCR

(PDI – December 17 & 24, 2005)

QUISUMBING LECTURES ON VALUES AT FAITH

Dr. Lourdes Quisumbing, UNESCO-APNIEVE president, recently held a lecture on Values at First Asia Institute of Technology and Humanities (Faith), Tanauan City, Batangas with the theme 'Values for Learning and Working Together'. In photo is Dr. Quisumbing with First Asia Institute president Saturnino G. Belen Jr. First Asia Institute is one of the leading educational institutions in Calabarzon.

1ST TRISKELION OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The UP Tau Gamma Phi Alumni Inc recently awarded the first Triskelion of the Year Awards to four of its outstanding alumni who have Excelled in their Chosen Field of Endeavors - Rene Domingo (Professional Achievement), Bobby Amores (Entrepreneurship), Jun Flor and Dod Peralta (Service to the Fraternity). Also given a posthumous award was Ben Beltran for composing the Triskelion Hymn. The awarding ceremonies were held last Dec. 13 at Club Filipino. On the photo are (from left): Jun Zamora (president), Rod Confesor (founder), Bobby Amores (awardee), Mila Beltran (for Ben Beltran), Jun Flor (awardee), Dod Peralta (awardee), Rene Domingo (awardee), Romy Bernardo (chair).

Volvo moves with Levi's

MOVING TO THE VIBRANT NEW BEAT, Volvo and Levi Strauss Philippines joined hands last Nov. 18 in an event that was engineered to bring fun and excitement to the fashion conscious generation. Entitled Rebirth, the occasion launched the Levi's Engineered Jeans and the partnership that will bring forth the Volvo-Levi's Activity Car.

With the theme "Free to Move", the evening was filled with activities that spelled out a new generation of expressing the zest for life. Graced by the metro's freshest and hippest personalities, it was also a venue for the young performers invited to the event to display their creativity and talents.

Levi's dealers were brought to the Volvo Makati Showroom by a convoy of eight Volvo vehicles specially marked with Free to Move car decals. The cars embodied the spirit of allowing its drivers to choose their own adventure and move to whatever direction they choose with absolute comfort and proven safety. Sumptuous food by MYLK filled washboard-flat tummies followed by a fashion show with a twist. Directed by party guru Robbie Carmona, the show not only featured living mannequins in their Levi's best but also showcased the latest craze. Members from Planet Zips performed their mesmerizing Poi moves as models did the catwalk. A Capoiera exhibition also showed the freedom of movement you can do with Levi's engineered jeans. Dancers from the hip hop group Allstars also performed and added verve to the already hyper event.

In true Volvo form, the evening displayed a vibrancy that denoted openness to new exciting activities that celebrate life.

In Manila, Viking Cars, Incorporated is the official distributor of Volvo cars. The Volvo Makati office, showroom and Aftersales Center are located at 2272 Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City while Volvo Ortigas Center and Aftersales Center is located at ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. The Volvo Cebu showroom is located at M.L. Quezon Avenue, Casuntingan, Mandaue City with contact numbers (032)345-0188 or 0916-687-3657.

Bits & Clips

YEC Final Clearance Sale 2005

YUPANGCO ELECTRONICS CORP (YEC) again brings another exciting offer in the professional audio industry. As an expression of gratitude to the patronage of their customers, YEC offers 50 percent, 60 percent, 70 percent discount from Dec. 1 to 31. World-renowned brands like Celestion, Soundtech and Yamaha as well as other value for money packages are up for grabs. It is indeed a treat for all professional audio buyers. For more details and inquiries, visit the website: http//www.yupangco.com, drop by at any Perfect Pitch Store, Music Spot Outlet, Yamaha Music Store or select dealers near you, call 899-9735, 899-9757 or 899-9758, e-mail at info@yupangco.com.

'Kong it!' and win cool gadgets from Burger King

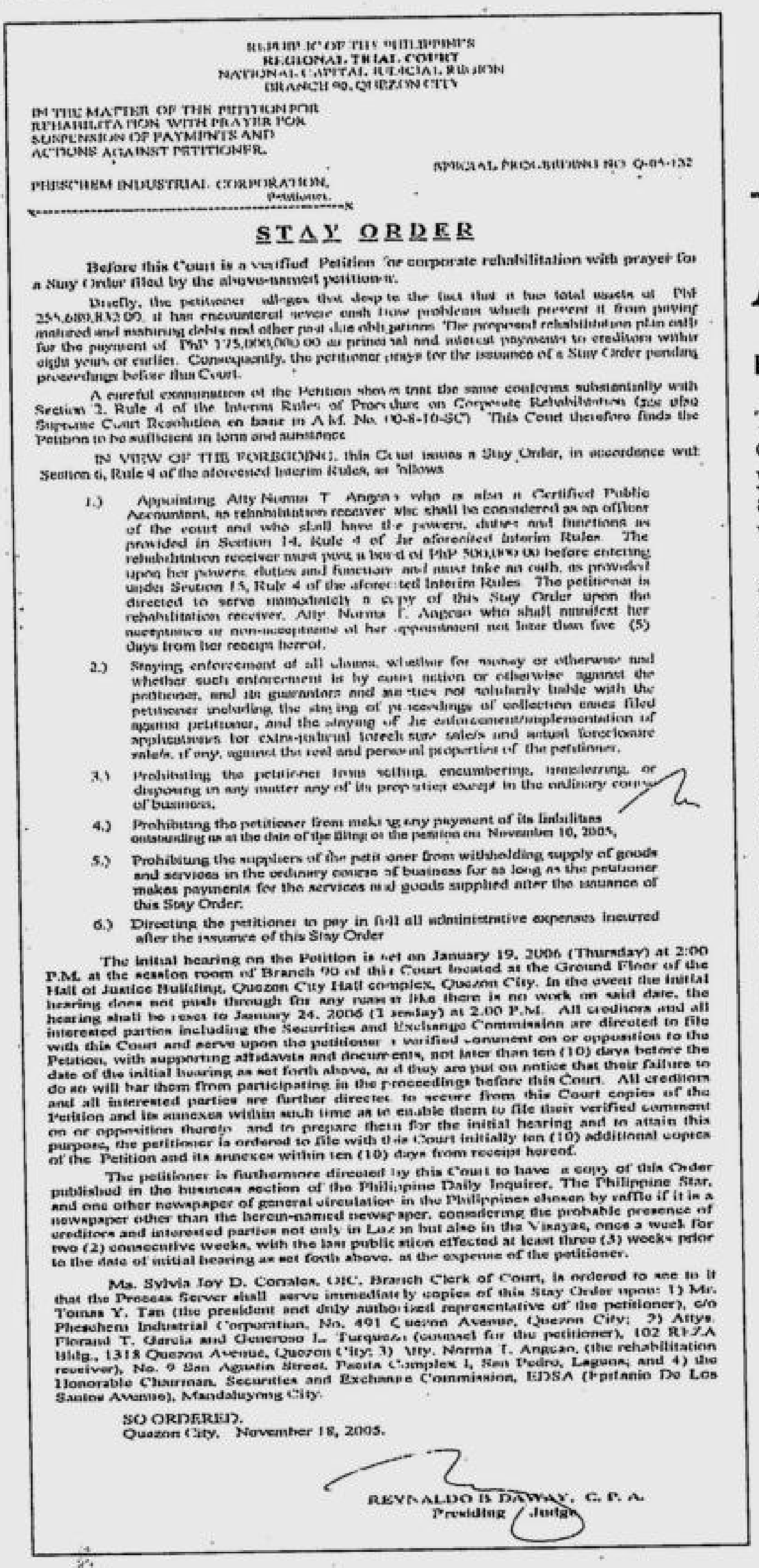
BURGER KING FEATURES THE KING KONG MEAL from December 2005 to January 2006. The King Kong Meal is a filling serving of the Whopper Jr., large fries and a 32 oz. Coke that comes in its own collectible King Kong tumbler. Every time you purchase this meal, you are treated to a peel-open card with instant freebies you can claim on your next visit. Keep this card for it is also your gateway to owning cool new gadgets. Just text in the unique code found in the card for a chance to win every week. The more times you text in, the more chances of winning. You also have the option to Kong it! any burger value meal for only P39 and you get the same Kong-sized side and drink: large fries and a 32 oz. Coke, of course in the limited edition King Kong tumbler. Every meal you Kong it! also entitles you to win in the weekly raffle.

Godiva holiday treat

UNTIL DEC. 30, EVERYONE CAN ENJOY 20 PERcent off an all Godiva Natural Skin Care products at Godiva Skin Station Makati Bel-Air branch. From the ever popular Skin Whitening line to the Anti-Acne and Anti-Aging products, now is the time to stock up on your favorite skin care item. No minimum purchase is necessary. Plus cash and credit cards are accepted. However, the promo is not applicable in conjunction with any other Godiva promos. For those who patronize the Godiva Skin Station in SM Fairview, the same discount promo will run until Jan. 1, 2006. For more details, call the Makati Bel-Air Skin Station at 939-1105 or the SM Fairview Skin Station at 751-6140.

Ateneo homecoming

THE ATENEO DE TUGUEGARAO ALUMNI ASSOciation is calling all alumni to its homecoming on Dec. 29 at the St. Peter's Cathedral Social Hall in Tuguegarao City. After the 8 o'clock Mass to be celebrated by Rev. Father Emmanuel Non, SJ, registration follows then breakfast will be served. Socialization, games, a convention highlighted by the election of the new board of directors where the officers of both Tuguegarao City and Manila chapters shall be named. High school class 1955 is the sponsor for this memorable event.



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
NATIONAL CAPITAL JUDICIAL REGION
BRANCH 90, QUEZON CITY

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION FOR
REHABILITATION WITH PRAYER FOR
SUSPENSION OF PAYMENTS AND
ACTIONS AGAINST PETITIONER.

SPECIAL PROCEEDINGS NO. Q-05-132

PHESCHEM INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION,
Petitioner.
x---x

STAY ORDER

Before this Court is a verified Petition for corporate rehabilitation with prayer for a Stay Order filed by the above-named petitioner.

Briefly, the petitioner alleges that despite the fact that it has total assets of PhP 255,680,832.00, it has encountered severe cash flow problems which prevent it from paying matured and maturing debts and other past due obligations. The proposed rehabilitation plan calls for the payment of PhP 175,000,000.00 as principal and interest payments to creditors within eight years or earlier. Consequently, the petitioner prays for the issuance of a Stay Order pending proceedings before this Court.

A careful examination of the Petition shows that the same conforms substantially with Section 2, Rule 4 of the Interim Rules of Procedure on Corporate Rehabilitation (see also Supreme Court Resolution en banc in A.M. No. 00-8-10-SC). This Court therefore finds the Petition to be sufficient in form and substance.

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, this Court issues a Stay Order, in accordance with Section 6, Rule 4 of the aforecited Interim Rules, as follows:

1.) Appointing Atty Norma T. Angcao who is also a Certified Public Accountant, as rehabilitation receiver who shall be considered as an officer of the court and who shall have the powers, duties and functions as provided in Section 14, Rule 4 of the aforecited Interim Rules. The rehabilitation receiver must post a bond of PhP 500,000.00 before entering upon her powers, duties and functions and must take an oath, as provided under Section 15, Rule 4 of the aforecited Interim Rules. The petitioner is directed to serve immediately a copy of this Stay Order upon the rehabilitation receiver, Atty. Norma T. Angcao who shall manifest her acceptance or non-acceptance of her appointment not later than five (5) days from her receipt hereof.

2.) Staying enforcement of all claims, whether for money or otherwise and whether such enforcement is by court action or otherwise against the petitioner, and its guarantors and sureties not solidarily liable with the petitioner including the staying of proceedings of collection cases filed against petitioner, and the staying of the enforcement/implementation of applications for extra-judicial foreclosure sale/s and actual foreclosure sale/s, if any, against the real and personal properties of the petitioner.

3.) Prohibiting the petitioner from selling, encumbering, transferring, or disposing in any matter any of its properties except in the ordinary course of business.

4.) Prohibiting the petitioner from making any payment of its liabilities outstanding as at the date of the filing of the petition on November 10, 2005,

5.) Prohibiting the suppliers of the petitioner from withholding supply of goods and services in the ordinary course of business for as long as the petitioner makes payments for the services and goods supplied after the issuance of this Stay Order.

6.) Directing the petitioner to pay in full all administrative expenses incurred after the issuance of this Stay Order

The initial hearing on the Petition is set on January 19, 2006 (Thursday) at 2:00 P.M. at the session room of Branch 90 of this Court located at the Ground Floor of the Hall of Justice Building, Quezon City Hall complex, Quezon City. In the event the initial hearing does not push through for any reason like there is no work on said date, the hearing shall be reset to January 24, 2006 (Tuesday) at 2:00 P.M. All creditors and all interested parties including the Securities and Exchange Commission are directed to file with this Court and serve upon the petitioner a verified comment on or opposition to the Petition, with supporting affidavits and documents, not later than ten (10) days before the date of the initial hearing as set forth above, and they are put on notice that their failure to do so will bar them from participating in the proceedings before this Court. All creditors and all interested parties are further directed to secure from this Court copies of the Petition and its annexes within such time as to enable them to file their verified comment on or opposition thereto and to prepare them for the initial hearing and to attain this purpose, the petitioner is ordered to file with this Court initially ten (10) additional copies of the Petition and its annexes within ten (10) days from receipt hereof.

The petitioner is furthermore directed by this Court to have a copy of this Order published in the business section of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, The Philippine Star, and one other newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines chosen by raffle if it is a newspaper other than the herein-named newspaper, considering the probable presence of creditors and interested parties not only in Luzon but also in the Visayas, once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks, with the last publication effected at least three (3) weeks prior to the date of initial hearing as set forth above, at the expense of the petitioner.

Ms. Sylvia Joy D. Corrales, OIC, Branch Clerk of Court, is ordered to see to it that the Process Server shall serve immediately copies of this Stay Order upon: 1) Mr. Tomas Y. Tan (the president and duly authorized representative of the petitioner), c/o Pheschem Industrial Corporation, No. 491 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City; 2) Attys. Florand T. Garcia and Generoso L. Turqueza (counsel for the petitioner), 102 RIZA Bldg., 1318 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City; 3) Atty. Norma T. Angcao, (the rehabilitation receiver), No. 9 San Agustin Street, Paola Complex I, San Pedro, Laguna; and 4) the Honorable Chairman, Securities and Exchange Commission, EDSA (Epifanio De Los Santos Avenue), Mandaluyong City.

SO ORDERED.
Quezon City, November 18, 2005.

REYNALDO B. DAWAY, C.P.A.
Presiding Judge

BUSINESS

Agri sector to sustain growth in '06

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE expects to sustain this year's double digit growth in the aquaculture and fishery sectors well into 2006.

The two sectors accounted for about 26 percent of the total agriculture output this year, Agriculture Secretary Domingo Panganiban yesterday said.

Agriculture next year will get a much needed boost from the twin sectors as more farmers and fisherfolk turn to aquaculture because of the quick return-on-investments, Panganiban said.

The sectors produce export winners such as seaweeds, tuna, anchovies, sardines, oysters and milkfish.

In 2006, agriculture growth may range between 4.2 percent to 5.2 percent, according to the National Economic and Development Authority.

Also, agriculture will contribute to higher export earnings for the country next year, said Dennis Arroyo, Neda director for policy and planning.

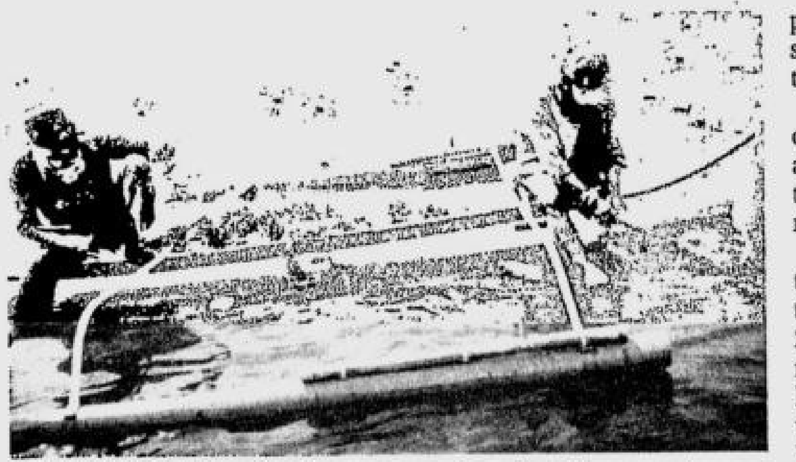
He added that the country's participation in the Early Harvest Program with China would result in higher export earnings.

Fresh produce from the Philippines, like coconut, mango and seaweeds, will be making its way to the huge Chinese market.

"It is also worth noting that the country received the third largest allocation for sugar imports to the United States next year," Arroyo said.

According to the Neda official, the manufacture and trade of automobiles will also do well in 2006 as foreign direct investments—estimated at $500 million—will pour into the country with the announced expansion of Ford Philippines Inc. and its subsidiary Mazda.

Also, the government's end year target of 5.3 percent is still attainable due to the strong performance of the agriculture, services and minerals sectors, all providing the needed boost to the economy in the second semester, Arroyo said.



A COUPLE harvest seaweed off the coast of Pagadian. The aquaculture and fishery sectors have pushed up this year's agriculture output.

MICHAEL F. SARCAUGA/CONTRIBUTOR

₱178-M gas pipeline venture gets perks

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE USE OF MALAMPAYA NATURAL gas outside the electricity generation sector was given a push as the Board of Investments approved the granting of tax incentives to First Gas Pipeline Corp.'s planned distribution line in Batangas.

Trade Undersecretary Elmer C. Hernandez, who is also BOI managing head, said the Lopez-controlled FGPL was building a P178.4-million pipeline from the gas processing plant in Barangay Sta. Rita, Batangas City to a delivery point in San Pascual town.

FGPL had sought pioneer status which would entitle the project to a six-year income tax holiday plus other fiscal and non-fiscal perks. The BOI, however, granted only a non-pioneer status, which means a four-year ITH and other incentives.

Hernandez said the natural gas would initially be distributed to a single industrial customer—United Coconut Chemicals Inc., the largest oleo chemical firm in the country.

Cocochem processes 100,000 tons of coconut yearly, and needs some 793,000 gigaJoules worth of natural gas in lieu of some 17 million liters of bunker fuel and 3.5 million liters of diesel that its factory is using yearly.

The 3-kilometer-long, six-inch-diameter, carbon steel pipeline's design would enable it to transport some 8,000 standard cubic meter of natural gas daily.

Raw gas comes from the offshore Malampaya production field near Palawan through a 500-kilometer undersea pipeline and is processed in a plant in Barangay Tabangao.

Before this, the gas from Malampaya is entirely used in power generation, supplying the fuel needs of three power plants with a combined production capacity of 2,700 megawatts.

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Altis 1.8 E A/T	878,000	100,000	66,560	45,836	36,536	26,072	21,038	18,160
Altis 1.6 E A/T	800,000	100,000	59,539	41,000	32,688	23,326	18,822	16,244
Altis 1.6 E M/T	765,000	100,000	56,388	38,831	30,962	22,094	17,828	15,385
Altis 1.6 J M/T	708,000	100,000	51,257	35,297	28,150	20,088	16,209	13,985

MODEL	SRP	DOWNPAYMENT	12	18	24	36	48	60
Innova 2.5 G A/T	1,045,000	100,000	82,039	56,495	45,014	32,122	25,919	22,384
Innova 2.5 G M/T	980,000	100,000	76,188	52,466	41,807	29,834	24,073	20,787
Innova 2.0 G A/T	985,000	100,000	76,638	52,776	42,054	30,010	24,215	20,910
Innova 2.0 G M/T	930,000	100,000	71,687	49,366	39,341	28,074	22,653	19,559
Innova 2.5 E M/T	885,000	100,000	67,636	46,576	37,121	26,489	21,374	18,454
Innova 2.5 J M/T	798,000	100,000	59,804	41,183	32,829	23,427	18,903	16,317
Innova 2.0 J M/T	748,000	100,000	55,303	38,084	30,362	21,667	17,483	15,089

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TOYOTA

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2005
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Super Countdown 1
Super
style . urban living . pop culture . entertainment . recreation
C1
E-mail: super@inquirer.com.ph
Text us your feedback: inquirer sup name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)
Editor **Pam Pastor**
Creative Director **Tim Yap**

Holiglazed

Gino de la Paz page C4 pits Jesus vs Santa Claus

Borgy and Ornussa, Richard and Georgina, Amanda G, Alex E, Nicole H, Jenni Ep and many more ... and a partridge in Embassy page C2

Happiness and peace for everyone this super season!
Photography: ANDY [illegible]
Cover art: SANTA'S LITTLE HELPERS

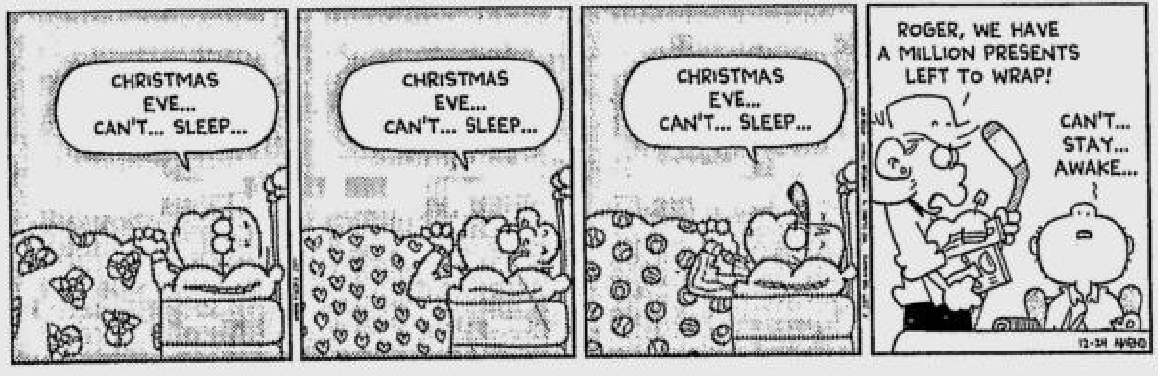
Magnolia
Gold
EDAM CHEESE BALL
To:
From:
PASTEURIZED PROCESSED CHEESE FOOD

All you need to do is write a special name.
Now, exquisitely-tasting Magnolia Gold Edam Cheese Ball comes in elegant gold boxes. Definitely an excellent gift this Christmas. All you need to think about are the names of the people who are special enough to receive one from you.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
ComicRelief
e-mail feedback at arts@inquirer.com.ph
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2005

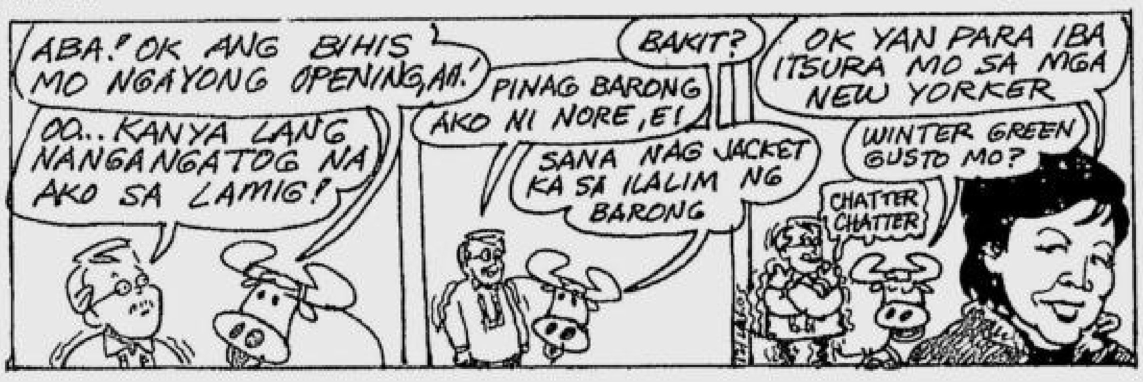
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


CHRISTMAS EVE... CAN'T... SLEEP...
CHRISTMAS EVE... CAN'T... SLEEP...
CHRISTMAS EVE... CAN'T... SLEEP...
ROGER, WE HAVE A MILLION PRESENTS LEFT TO WRAP!
CAN'T... STAY... AWAKE...
12-24 AMEND

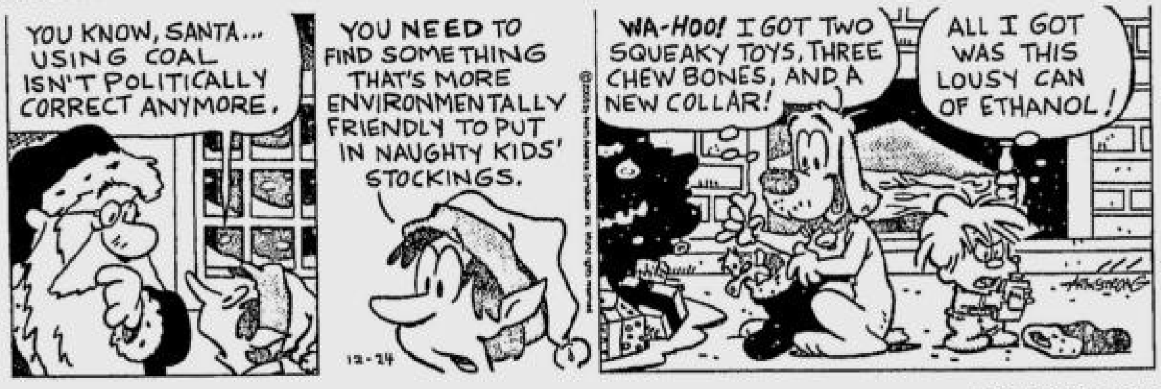
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ABA! OK ANG BIHIS MO NGAYONG OPENING,AH!
OO... KANYA LANG NANGANGATOG NA AKO SA LAMIG!
BAKIT?
PINAG BARONG AKO NI NORE, E!
SANA NAG JACKET KA SA ILALIM NG BARONG
OK YAN PARA IBA ITSURA MO SA MGA NEW YORKER
WINTER GREEN GUSTO MO?
CHATTER CHATTER

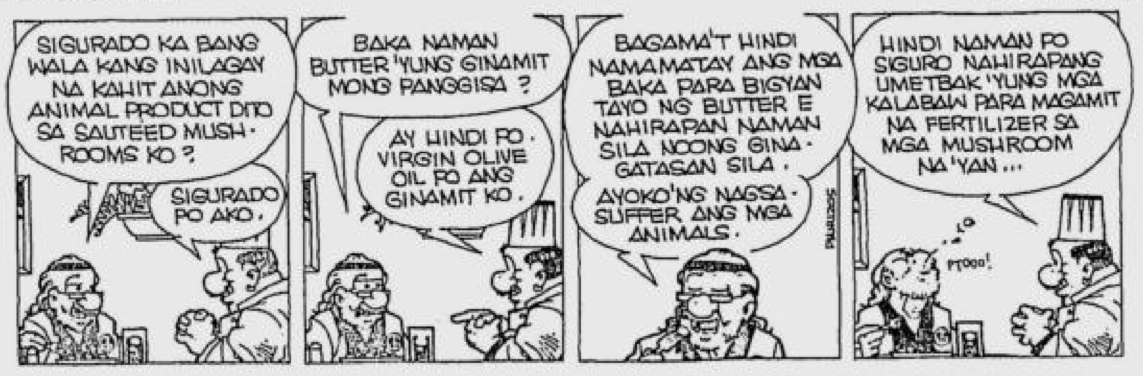
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


YOU KNOW, SANTA... USING COAL ISN'T POLITICALLY CORRECT ANYMORE.
YOU NEED TO FIND SOMETHING THAT'S MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY TO PUT IN NAUGHTY KIDS' STOCKINGS.
12-24
WA-HOO! I GOT TWO SQUEAKY TOYS, THREE CHEW BONES, AND A NEW COLLAR!
ALL I GOT WAS THIS LOUSY CAN OF ETHANOL!
ARMSTRONG

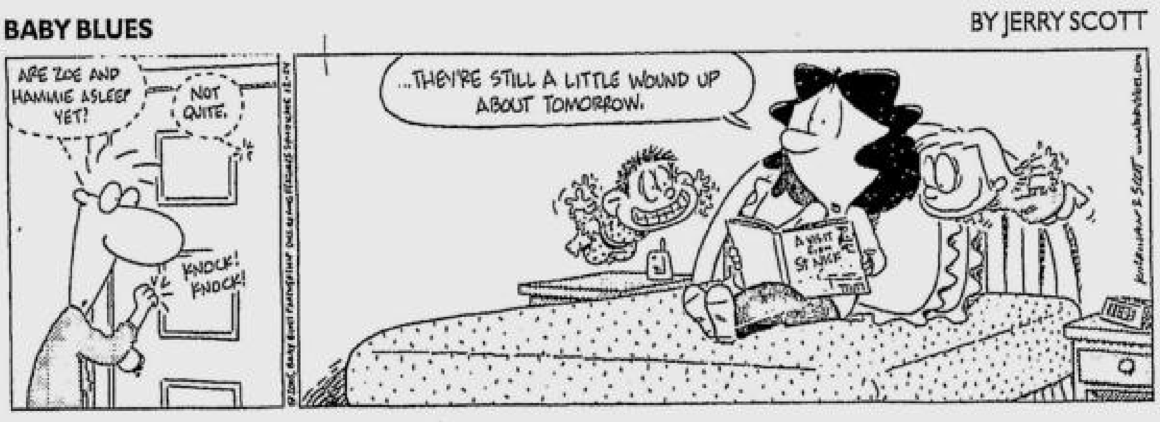
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


SIGURADO KA BANG WALA KANG INILAGAY NA KAHIT ANONG ANIMAL PRODUCT DITO SA SAUTEED MUSH-ROOMS KO?
SIGURADO PO AKO.
BAKA NAMAN BUTTER 'YUNG GINAMIT MONG PANGGISA?
AY HINDI PO. VIRGIN OLIVE OIL PO ANG GINAMIT KO.
BAGAMA'T HINDI NAMAMATAY ANG MGA BAKA PARA BIGYAN TAYO NG BUTTER E NAHIRAPAN NAMAN SILA NOONG GINA-GATASAN SILA.
AYOKO'NG NAGSA-SUFFER ANG MGA ANIMALS.
HINDI NAMAN PO SIGURO NAHIRAPANG UMETBAK 'YUNG MGA KALABAW PARA MAGAMIT NA FERTILIZER SA MGA MUSHROOM NA 'YAN...
PTOOO!

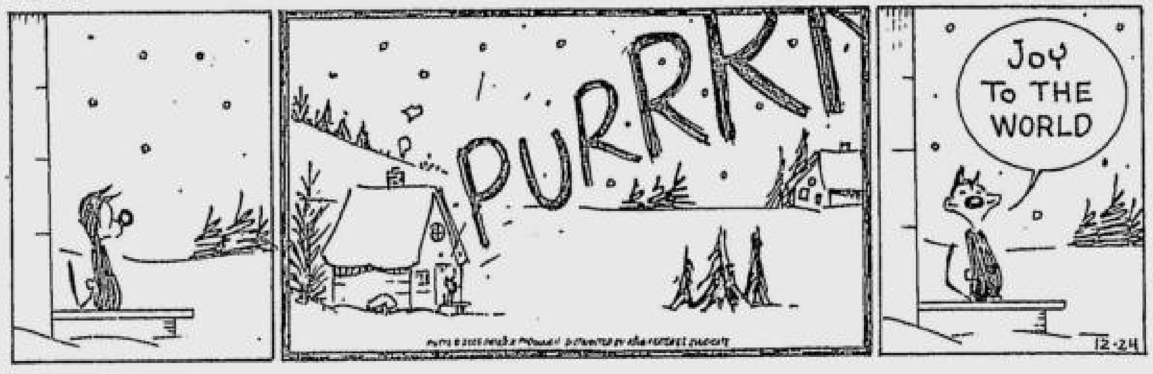
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


ARE ZOE AND HAMMIE ASLEEP YET?
NOT QUITE.
KNOCK! KNOCK!
...THEY'RE STILL A LITTLE WOUND UP ABOUT TOMORROW.
A VISIT FROM ST. NICK
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

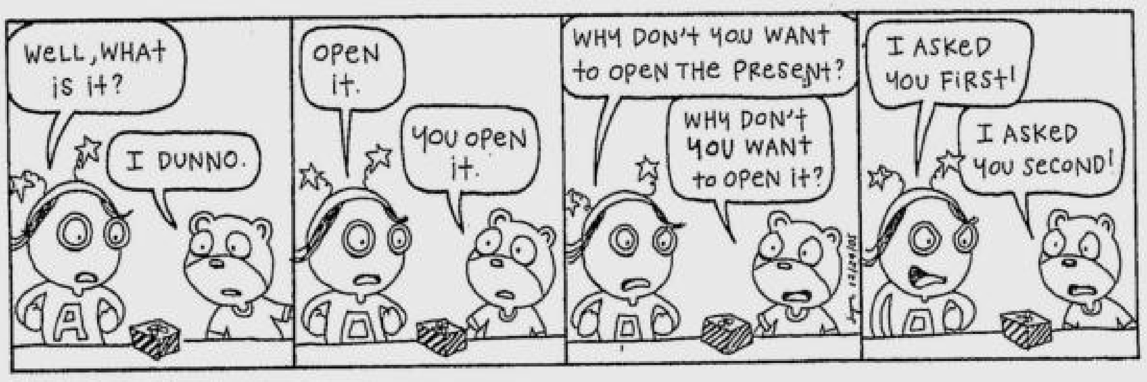
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


PURRRK!
JOY TO THE WORLD
12-24

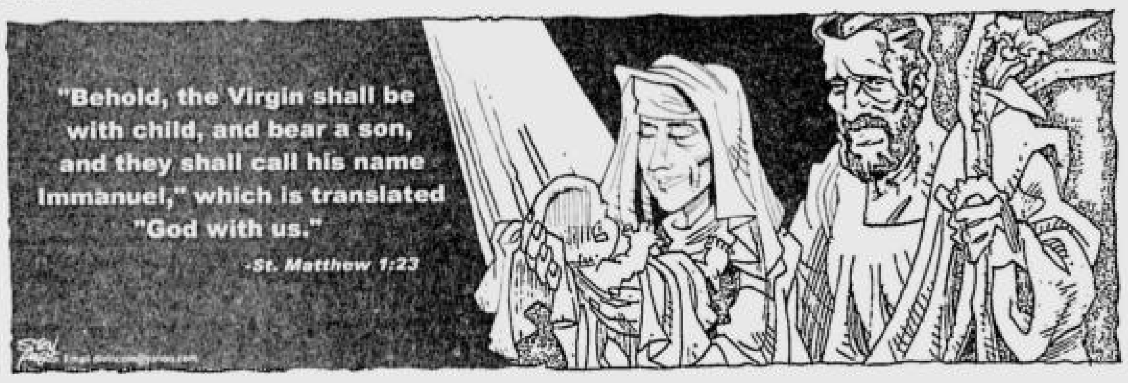
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


WELL, WHAT IS IT?
I DUNNO.
OPEN IT.
YOU OPEN IT.
WHY DON'T YOU WANT TO OPEN THE PRESENT?
WHY DON'T YOU WANT TO OPEN IT?
I ASKED YOU FIRST!
I ASKED YOU SECOND!

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


"Behold, the Virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which is translated "God with us."
-St. Matthew 1:23

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: Without question, you're a visionary. You see things and attempt things others wouldn't even dream of doing. You're extremely organized and capable. You will attempt something against great odds. You are quite psychic, and you have an excellent imagination. Lucky you! The year ahead might be one of the best years of your life.

Birthdate of: Mary Higgins Clark, mystery author; Ryan Seacrest, TV host; Howard Hughes, industrialist.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a wonderful day to see museums, visit bookstores or go to university campuses and places of learning. Unusual ideas excite you today!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You feel rather psychic today. You might not know what to make of it. But it's as if you're tuned in to the ether or something. You can practically read minds!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is an excellent day to counsel partners and good friends. You seem to easily put your finger on what the problem is; this helps you know exactly what to say.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): For whatever reason, you can help coworkers today. Perhaps others need advice; perhaps they need practical assistance. Either way, you're there for them.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a wonderfully creative day for you. You are definitely in touch with your inner muse. It's also a good day to work with children, or help a particular child who needs your attention.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You're prepared to listen to a family member who needs to share worries or grief. You have a sympathetic ear for this person. Be patient and loving.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Your imagination is very vivid today! You seem to think in pictures. You also feel very tuned in to other people's thoughts. (Kinda spooky.)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You're tempted to buy something quite extravagant today. You always like the best. Well, if you can afford it, do it. You'll probably love it.

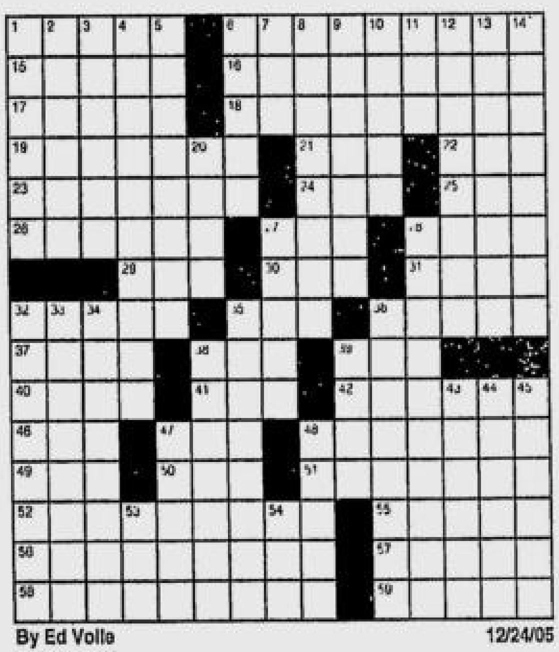
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Your idealism is aroused today. Your appreciation of beauty is also heightened. This is a wonderful day to see beautiful things, visit parks and have exciting conversations about new and different ideas.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're extremely psychic today, even if you think you aren't. Trust your gut reactions. Messages can come to you through the universe.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You might need help from a friend today; alternatively, you might help a friend today. You feel sympathetic, as you relate to others. (Your sign always wants to make the world a better place.)

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Talk to bosses, parents, teachers and important people about your vision for the future. You have a sense of what should be. Don't be afraid to share this with others.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Ed Voile
Gillette, WY
12/24/05

ACROSS
1 Allotted portion
6 Underlying layers
15 Aggregate
16 Body structures
17 Domicile
18 High-water lines
19 Terror-stricken
21 Ms. encl.
22 Tours summer
23 Building builder
24 Actor Wallach
25 God of the lower world
26 Overtax
27 NYC showplace
28 Food for Swaps
29 Ship's record
30 Old English letter
31 Tickled-pink feeling
32 Order pizza delivered
35 Egyptian god of pleasure
36 Sanctify
37 Letter opener?
38 Get off one's feet
39 Born
40 Chelsea carriage
41 Existed once
42 Trick into difficulty
46 Peculiar
47 Derek and Jackson
48 Cane cutter
49 S. Amer. nation
50 "Kidnapped" auth.
51 Pertinent
52 __ Workers' Party
55 Praying figure
56 Coming forth
57 Cinnamon or nutmeg
58 Reckless action
59 Jewish feast

DOWN
1 Stirrup bone
2 College in Geneva, NY
3 One who makes amends
4 Extremist's point of view
5 Part of the democratic process
6 Lascivious creature
7 Prefix for sphere or sex
8 Born losers
9 Less visible B-2 bomber
10 "My Cousin Vinny" co-star
11 Sch. in Sandhurst
12 Terrier type
13 Objects formed by a meteorite impact
14 Evaluates
20 "King __",
27 Encounters
28 Georgia founder
32 Married
33 Landing field by an old name
34 Maligner
35 Causing prejudice
36 "Chariots of Fire" co-star
38 Puffed up
39 Kind of tide
43 Settled one's debts
44 Immediately if not sooner
45 Nag
47 Son of Odin and Frigg
48 San __, CA
53 Sale-tag disclaimer abbr.
54 Advanced deg.

Friday's Puzzle Solved

P	E	P	■	D	O	O	R	■	O	D	A	M	A	E
U	M	A	■	R	E	N	O	■	B	E	N	I	G	N
L	I	C	K	O	R	E	S	■	T	E	N	S	E	D
S	L	E	E	P	■	T	E	N	U	R	E	S	■	■
A	I	R	Y	■	H	I	B	O	S	E	■	T	O	M
R	O	S	S	■	A	M	U	S	E	■	S	E	M	I
■	■	■	■	S	U	E	D	E	■	S	H	A	R	E
M	I	S	S	A	L	■	■	■	T	O	O	K	I	N
E	B	E	R	T	■	P	E	R	O	N	■	■	■	■
T	I	E	S	■	A	L	L	E	N	■	H	O	S	P
A	S	K	■	S	L	E	E	V	E	■	O	N	T	O
■	■	W	A	T	T	A	G	E	■	S	H	E	E	P
E	M	I	N	E	M	■	I	N	C	H	O	I	R	S
M	A	N	A	N	A	■	S	U	L	U	■	L	E	I
P	O	S	T	O	N	■	T	E	X	T	■	L	O	N

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12/24/05

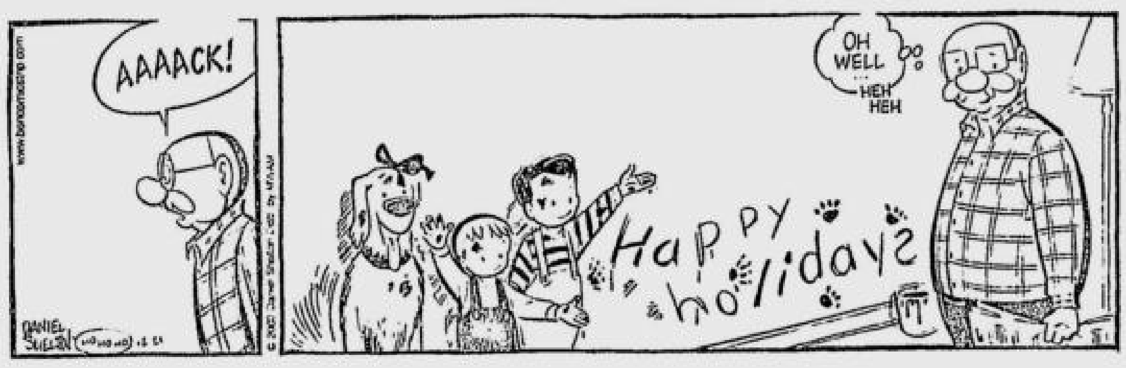
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO

Maligayang Pasko!
mula sa Mikrokosmos
www.mikrokosmos.tk

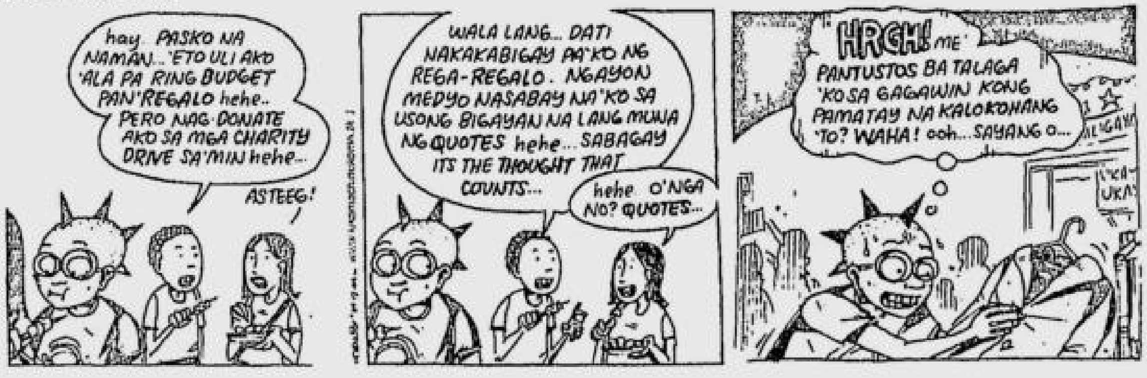
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


AAAACK!
OH WELL ... HEH HEH
Happy holidays
DANIEL SHELTON

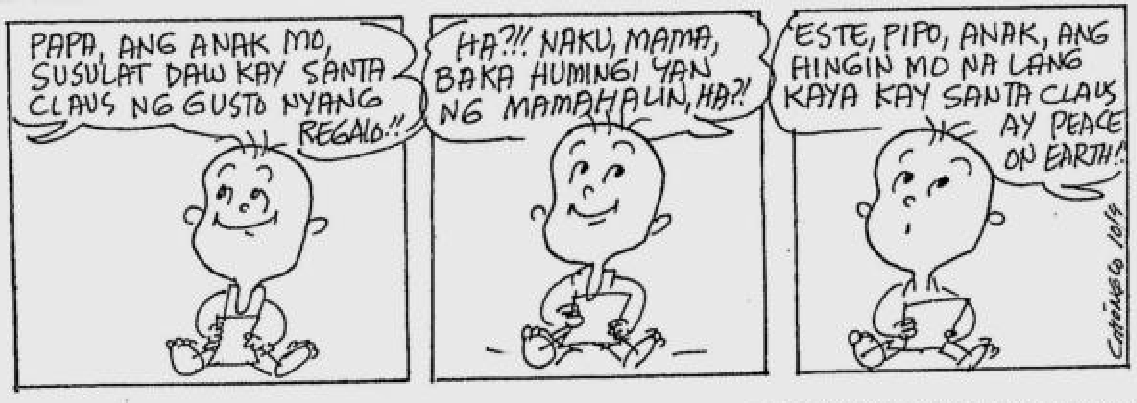
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


hay. PASKO NA NAMAN... 'ETO ULI AKO 'ALA PA RING BUDGET PAN'REGALO hehe..
PERO NAG-DONATE AKO SA MGA CHARITY DRIVE SA'MIN hehe...
ASTEEG!
WALA LANG... DATI NAKAKABIGAY PA'KO NG REGA-REGALO. NGAYON MEDYO NASABAY NA'KO SA USONG BIGAYAN NA LANG MUNA NG QUOTES hehe... SABAGAY ITS THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS...
hehe O'NGA NO? QUOTES...
HRGH! ME' PANTUSTOS BA TALAGA 'KO SA GAGAWIN KONG PAMATAY NA KALOKOHANG 'TO? WAHA! ooh... SAYANG O...

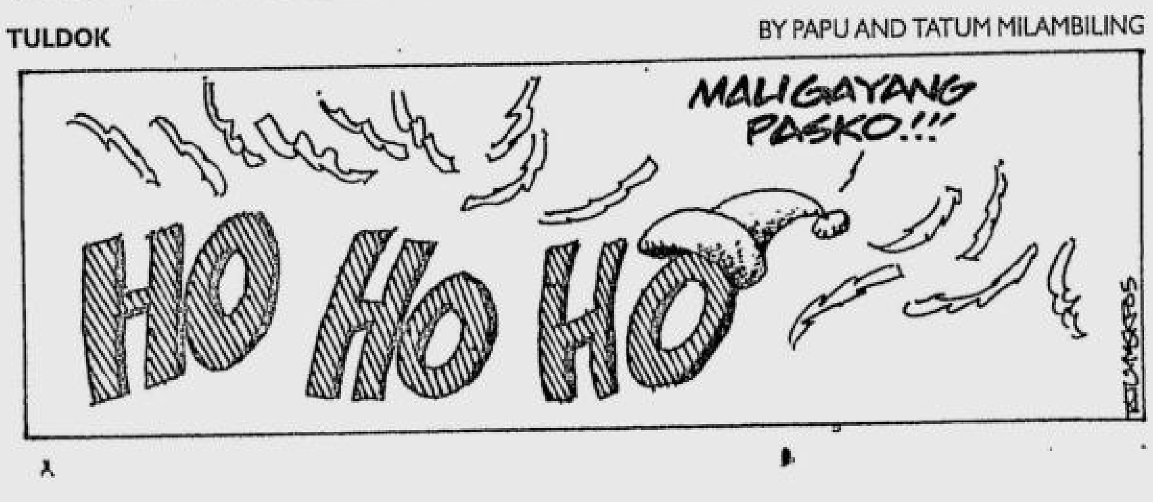
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


PAPA, ANG ANAK MO, SUSULAT DAW KAY SANTA CLAUS NG GUSTO NYANG REGALO!!
HA?!! NAKU, MAMA, BAKA HUMINGI YAN NG MAMAHALIN, HA?!
ESTE, PIPO, ANAK, ANG HINGIN MO NA LANG KAYA KAY SANTA CLAUS AY PEACE ON EARTH!
CHIONGLO 10/4

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING

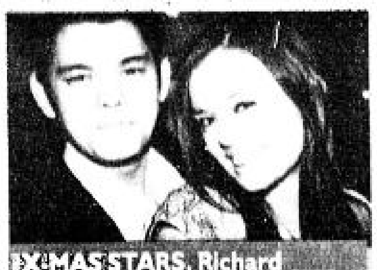

MALIGAYANG PASKO!!!
HO HO HO

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Super

EMBASSY'S FUN FUN FUN YULETIDE THANKSGIVING PARTY PARTY PARTY

JINGLE BELLES. Amanda Griffin and Rochine Lane

SLEIGH BELLS RING. Patrick Reyno and Mariko Jacinto


X-MAS STARS. Richard Gutierrez and Georgina Wilson

WHITE X-MAS. Michelle Pamintuan and Erik Cua

NAUGHTY AND NICE. Lizette Claudio and Pepe Diokno

SISONS' GREETINGS. Lindsay Sison and Ianne Evangelista

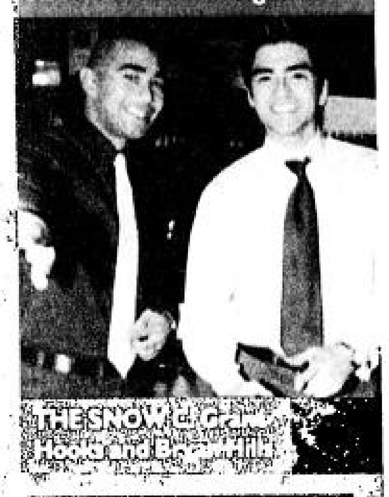
MERRY X-MAS DARLING. Borgy Manotoc and Ornussa Cadness

ALL IS BRIGHT. Bambi Hernandez and Will Devaughn

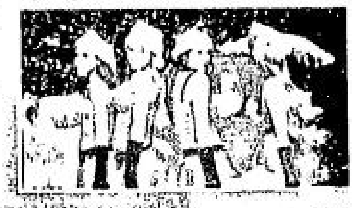
CENTURY CINDERELLA. Leo Po and Marielle Santos

FELIZ NAVIDAD. Nicolas Cacciavillani and Mariana Condo

EYES ALL AGLOW. Gi[illegible] Reyes and Chicho Suarez


THE SNOW. C. Grace Hooks and B[illegible]

Have a Super! cool yule!



'Cause we sure are!

By Gino de La Paz and Pepe Diokno
Photos by Eddie Boy Escudero and Willy Saw

WHAT'S A BETTER WAY TO kick off the holiday party season than with suits, dresses, and enough Freixenet champagne/René Barbier wine/Johnny Walker Gold to make you feel like you're dashing through the snow? (Or on the pavement outside Embassy? But that's a different story.)

Embassy celebrated Christmas with an intimate gathering of Super and friends (they're [illegible] wanted to, we didn't invite the whole world and their mothers). Yeah, attire was strictly formal, but behavior was a little far from that. [illegible] have we seen so many people dressed so nicely and it was like, totally refreshing.

So, once you get over the picking-your-outfit hump (or the OMG-which-dress hump), formal attire can be a totally relaxing thing. When you see that everyone's pretty much looking the same, you lose your inhibitions (or [illegible] that or the wine). Suits also keep you warm and fuzzy — okay, dresses don't. [illegible]

We say more occasions should [illegible] formally.

SNOW ANGEL. Nicole Hernandez

PEACE ON EARTH. Super's Gino de la Paz in Cuisine

1 For the young women, keep your [illegible] if you're in a [illegible] dress [illegible] Spillage of The Boobage.

2 [illegible] Spillage of The Boobage [illegible] keep your hands, camera phones and cameras ready. We mean in your pockets!

3 If you spill a drink on yourself, resist the urge to immediately [illegible] Instead, play it cool and spill the entire [illegible] on yourself [illegible] your kin. Or play dead.

4 [illegible] someone rocking the same outfit [illegible] look for one more person [illegible] to complete your group. It's very Jingle Bell Rock meets Mean Girls right?

5 A formal holiday party is not the time to think about your relationships [illegible] tell him your heart [illegible] next day [illegible] See Number [illegible]

6 It's one thing to kiss a stranger under the mistletoe, it's another thing to start dry humping under it. We've always [illegible] the bathroom over there.

7 [illegible] chatting up [illegible] Congratulations! You're drunk.

8 It happens. But sometimes [illegible] to follow the dress code [illegible] smile [illegible] But don't [illegible] Why? [illegible] RSVP'd but don't [illegible] Yeah. Anywhere.

9 [illegible] your tie to sexy dance [illegible]

10 [illegible] When you wanna wrap the party up [illegible] play that Pinoy Big Brother theme by Orange and Lemons. Or anything [illegible]

REINDEER GAMES. Micah and Kath, Alex and Mike, Charlie, D[illegible], Ayam and Hans — the next cast of Pinoy Big Brother?

LET IT SNOW. Jann E[illegible], Scoop's Katrina Holigores, Tim Yap and Jojo I[illegible]

HOLIDAZE. JM Rodriguez, Alex Gutierrez and Manolet Dario spin X-mas tunes.

KRIS KRINGLE. Tina Tinio, Mariko Jacinto and JR Isaac (fully clothed)

11 [illegible] It's not enough to give your [illegible] and friends the [illegible] of your friendship. Give them a little tongue. Or whatever. See Number 6.

12 Formal attire [illegible] are not [illegible] So you and your buddies can act like wild animals. Formal wild animals.

Where were we? Yes, in the end, keep in mind that the purpose of parties is to let go, unwind, hakuna matata, happy Hannukah, crazy Kwanzaa, *Busog ka man din*. Sorry, we're drunk. [illegible] the spirit of Christmas.

So lose your [illegible] and don't [illegible]

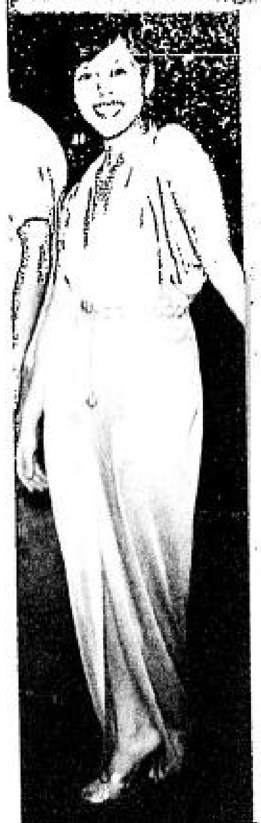
A Super cool yule to all! Happy [illegible] days.

The Super Christmas party was held at Embassy, Global City. [illegible] tonight and tomorrow and for the rest of the holiday season. Call (02) [illegible]

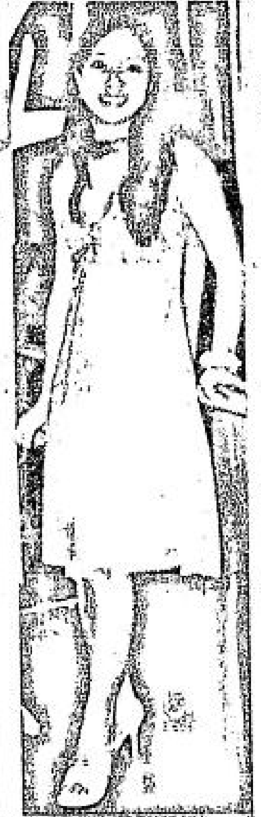
Super thank you to Johnny Walker Gold and René Barbier premium selection wine.

UNDER the mistletoe. Hans Eckstein and Ayam Barredo

JINGLE BELL ROCK. Marco and [illegible]


CHRISTMAS SPIRIT. Xeny Zulueta

SUPER SANTA. Tim Yap in Rajo

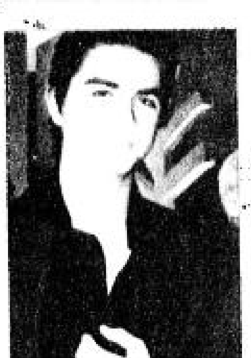

FELIZ NATALS. Super's Tals Diaz

ONE WISE MAN. Jon H[illegible]

HOT CHILE! Hola Rodrigo

BRAZIL NUT. Joao Furtan

SAN MIG LIGHTS. Miguel Rosales

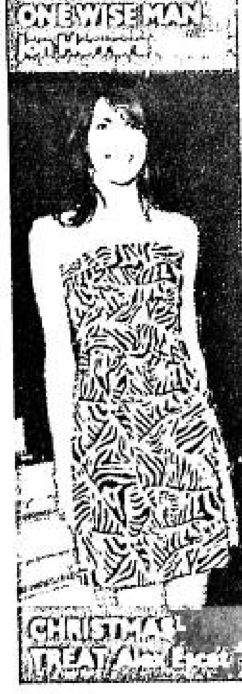

BUON NATALE. Gianpaolo Panizzi[illegible]

VIKTOR'S SECRET. Sh[illegible]

HEILIGE NACHT. [illegible] Hoffman

YULETIDE CAROLS. Ivan Zalameda

DON WE NOW. DJ Mo[illegible]

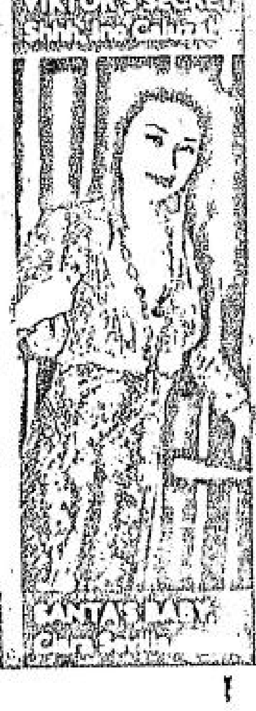

CHRISTMAS TREAT. Alex Escat

X-MAS SHOPPINGERA. Jenni Epperson

MAKING SPIRITS BRIGHT. Chinggay Andrada

LIGHT AND BUBBLY. Bubbles Paraiso

MERRY AND BRIGHT. Vicky Herrera


SANTA'S BABY. Clara S[illegible]

AVI NEW YEAR. A[illegible]

CANDY CANE. Tina Pamintuan

HO HO HO!!! Merry Christmas!

Christ vs Claus: The ultimate Holiday showdown

Age against the machine

Gino de la Paz

Who gets to own the top Christmas delivery franchise this season? Uhm, surprise! It's holiday fiction time!

HE SHOULD BE GETTING CRUNK TO 50 Cent and partying with the shorties like it's His birthday because traditionally, uhm, it is. But for some reason, Jesus Christ is puzzlingly and biblically sad during Christmastime. Why, you ask? Those darn popularity surveys.

For decades now, whenever the December sweeps roll along, Jesus always winds up second to that superchubby dude in the red suit, Santa Claus. He thought His newly-minted Hollywood box office status—and totally rad (Pontius) Pilates-toned bod—would be enough to win the kids over. Duh, He was wrong. These days, it takes more than Mel Gibson, a dazzling command of Aramaic, and a fistful of miracles to boost weak PR. Thank, er, God the idea of an image makeover hit Him sooner than later. And thank God some more it didn't involve hooking up with Angelina Jolie and handing out donations to quake victims in Islamabad, Pakistan. Though Jesus Christ considered it. Seriously.

Anyway, after rounding up an attentive and rather perky posse of angels, saints, and media-savvy unicorns, Jesus passed around a few glasses of water-into-wine and dove straight into a marketing huddle. To strengthen His brand, He discovered that an anti-Claus Internet smear campaign wasn't enough. (Yeah, the whole "Santa mixed up is Satan" thing was His idea. Though cute, it's still very amateur and 5th grade reindeer game-like.) His new mission became clear: Christ needs to turn Claus's "Ho ho ho!" into "Ho ho no you don't!" and fast. But, like, how?

Christmas jeer

Point by point, it all seemed like a losing battle. First of all, Santa unfailingly brings toys and goodies to kids from one to 92 during the holidays. On the other hand, Jesus seems to have the same scripted excuse each and every year. "Dear (name of child), that iPod would have to wait till you're dead and go to heaven. Which isn't, like, a sure thing. Heaven, I mean. And the iPod, too." Boo, right?

Second, Santa isn't really picky and would merrily take the cookies and milk and whatever high-carb, high-fat item you'd leave for him by the tree. He doesn't care about diets! Meanwhile, Jesus demands at least 10% of your income, especially if you're Mormon and stuff. Surprise!

Third, Santa doesn't give a hoot about whom you bang. But Christ is a party pooper because He says you can't have sex (and free your equipment from the shrink wrap in which it came) until you get married. To one person! (One! Person!) This is totally not related to the holidays but again, it's still not a good thing if you wanna get the popular vote.

Last, Claus is so now that Lindsay Lohan and the other "Mean Girls" hotties dressed like him while singing "Jingle Bell Rock." (Which should've been called "Jingle Bell Racks.") In stark contrast, the best song-and-dance tribute Christ ever got was a Broadway musical. In the '70s. O, holy fright!

'Tis the season to be creepy

Since His Dad, God, was busy running the Kingdom of Heaven and His homies, The Three Wise Men, were away on a peacekeeping mission in Iraq, it was up to Jesus to make the next move. In a comment He posted on Santa's blog, Jesus wrote that He's had enough of the other-cheek-turning and would like a "proper showdown." He would like to take back His holiday from Santa's chimney-clogging ass once and for all. Hoping to sound heroic, Christ ended His carefully worded message by saying that all He wanted were "peace on earth and a bucket of Rudolph's blood! Amen." Gnarly!

Sensing it was no longer one of Christ's half-baked adolescent schemes, Santa shot back four words: "bring," "it," "on" and the last one that rhymes with "hitch." Of course, Claus wasn't about to give up his worldwide franchise without a fight. In the off chance he'd lose against a supposed gift-giving lightweight, he'd have to give up royalties from movie adaptations of his life starring Tim Allen, lucrative endorsement deals with Coca-Cola, and sweatshops across the North Pole and Greater China. On top of that, he'd have to say "Adios!" to Mrs. Claus, who doesn't socialize with losers. The game was totally on.

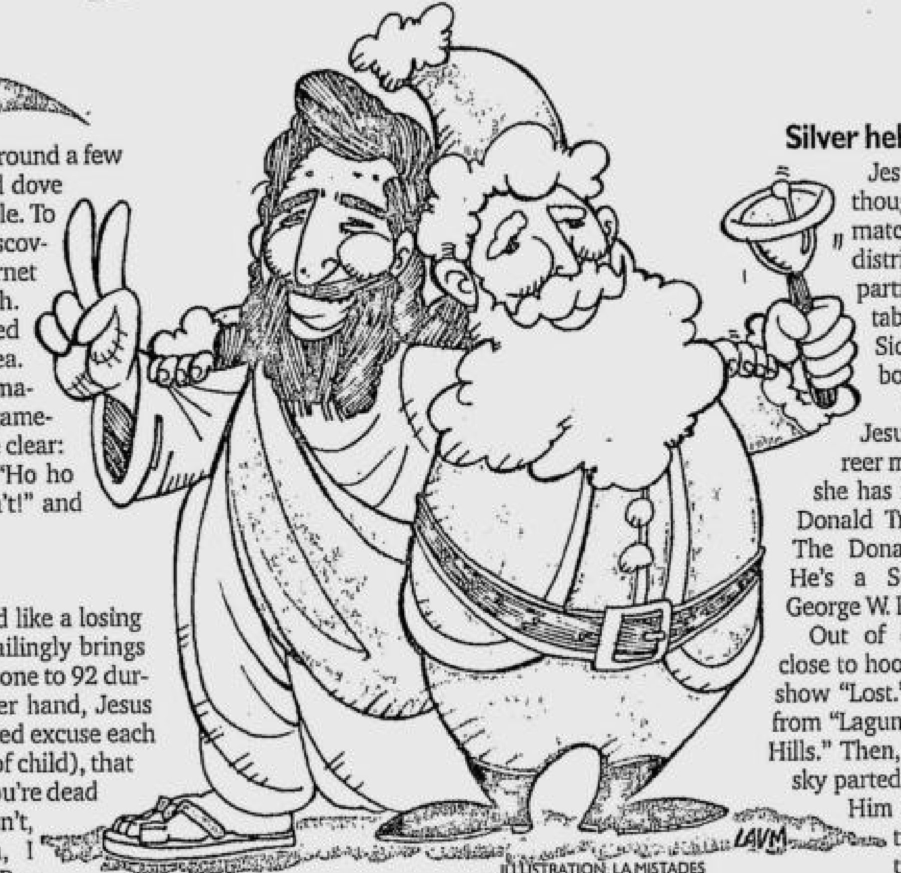


ILLUSTRATION: LA MISTADES

Silver hell

Jesus Christ had a strategy though. He knew that He was no match for Santa's production and distribution empire so He had to partner up with someone really established. Looking through His Sidekick, He came across several boldfaced names.

Tara Reid? She'd probably tell Jesus to show more skin as a career move. So, duh. Paris Hilton? All she has is a celebrity sex tape factory. Donald Trump? The Jesus can't stand The Donald's combover. Tom Cruise? He's a Scientologist, for Chrissakes! George W. Bush? The devil! 'Nuff said!

Out of desperation, Christ was this close to hooking up with anyone from the show "Lost." He even considered anyone from "Laguna Beach" and its spin-off "The Hills." Then, in true heavenly fashion, the sky parted and a beam of light shone on Him and His ultimate communication device. Jesus finally found the perfect ally and He was so, like, pumped.

The stars are brightly shining

The name of Jesus Christ's new business partner was to remain a tightly guarded secret until the face-off. On high noon GMT of Christmas Eve day, Jesus Christ and Santa Claus met in a snowy, neutral place—Switzerland. Or Canada. Whatever. Each was supposed to bring his respective supply of holiday presents as well as the machinery required to distribute them around the world.

Being the smug veteran, Santa brought along Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen and his other reindeer teamsters. Pulling up the rear were hundreds of thousands of elves, some of whom moonlighted as Oompa Loompas in "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory." The Claus' mountain of gifts was overwhelming, too, to say the least. He had choo-choo trains, Game Boy Micros, and iPods for every boy and girl who believed in him. Whoa.

Undaunted, Jesus Christ stood dressed in a loincloth and a long stripey scarf that kept Him warm and terribly stylish. Before Santa could mock Christ in His aloneness, Jesus whips out a few cue cards and introduces His backer.

"My ally can top your long-established Christmas delivery franchise. She is a one-woman defense force who has not only an army, but an army of celebrities like Julia Roberts, Will Smith and—yup—Nelson Mandela. She was able to enter Hurricane Katrina territory and help the flood victims, something even the US government wasn't able to do when they needed to do it. She got Middle America to get off their lardbutts and exercise. She convinced people to read and not just any book, mind you, but John Steinbeck's spectacularly boring 'The Grapes of Wrath.' She educates us daily about serial killers, alcohol poisoning and Kirstie Alley's new kitchen redesigned by Nate Berkus. She has also donated thousands upon thousands of dolls, solar radios and other Christmas goodies to kids in Kwazulu Natal, aka South Africa's AIDS country, so this won't be new to her. And combining her Angel Network with my own legion of archangels, we'll finally see who among them and your reindeer really know how to fly ..."

Santa was stunned because, through marketing one-upmanship, Jesus Christ had finally won the battle for Christmas supremacy. The Messiah's secret weapon? Someone named Oprah Winfrey.

Like, Merry Christmas everyone!

The end.

O Calm, All Ye Faithful.

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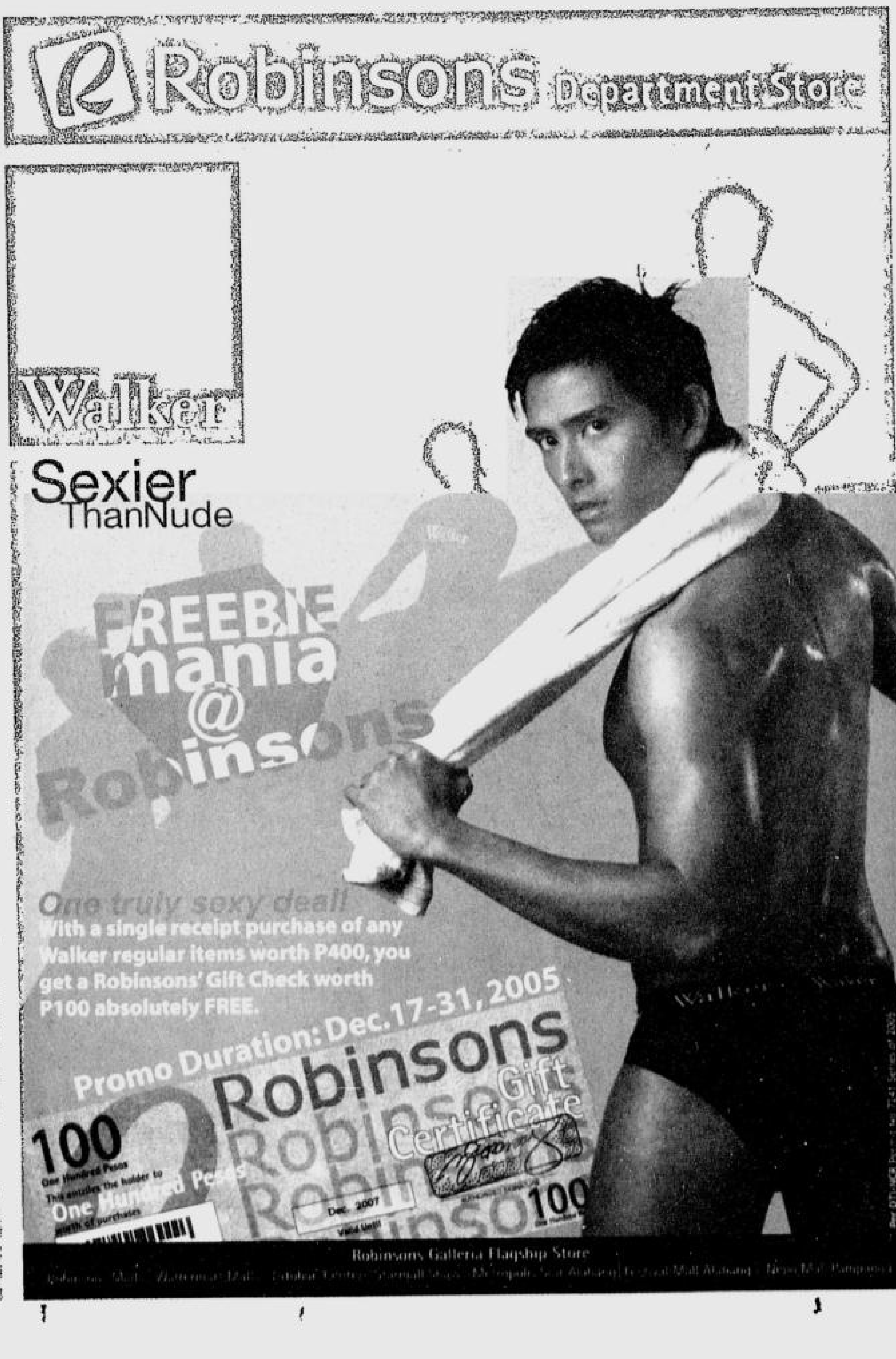
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